

LITTLE BLACK STORIES
FOR
LITTLE WHITE CHILDREN

C208599



**OTHER BOOKS BY
BLAISE CENDRARS:**

THE AFRICAN SAGA

**THE ILLUSTRATIONS FOR THIS BOOK ARE
FROM ORIGINAL WOODBLOCKS BY
PIERRE PINSARD**



LITTLE BLACK STORIES

FOR

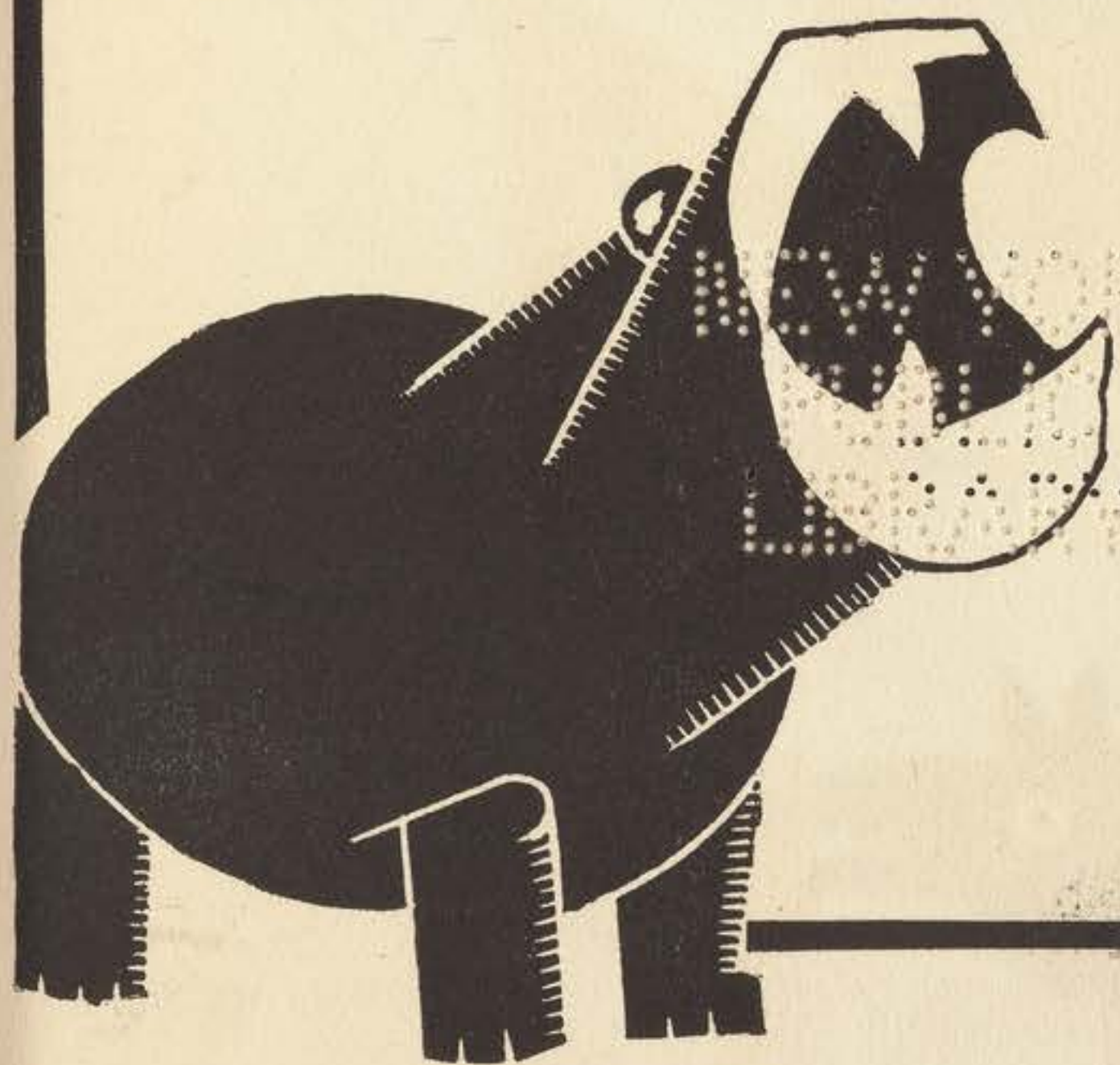
LITTLE WHITE CHILDREN

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

**BLAISE
CENDRARS**

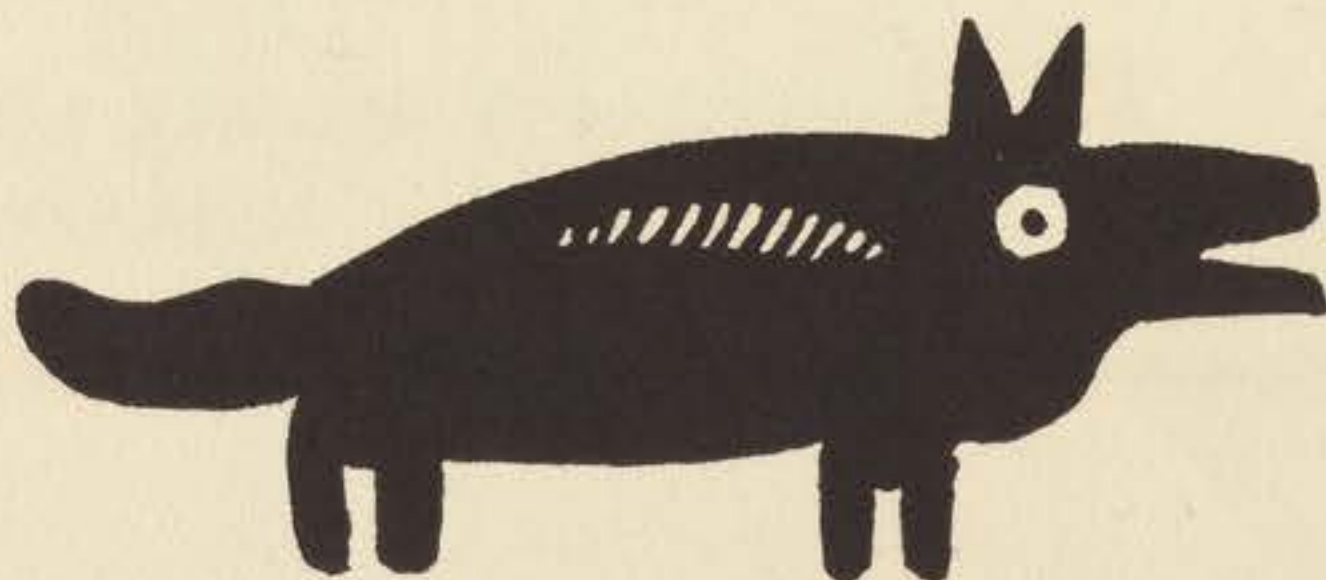
BY MARGERY BIANCO

**PAYSON & CLARKE LTD
NEW YORK MCMXXIX**



**COPYRIGHT, 1929, BY
BLAISE CENDRARS**

WYV WEN
21.00
YV.00



398

C

DIVISION OF
NEGRO LITERATURE AND HISTORY

C 208599

TO
DANIE
IN EXCHANGE FOR HER PENGUIN
AND
TO
CLAUDE
FOR HIS LITTLE CHICKEN
THESE STORIES
WHICH THE BIG CHILDREN OF AFRICA
TELL AROUND THE FIRE AT NIGHT
TO AMUSE THEMSELVES
AND
TO KEEP WATCH AGAINST THE BEASTS
WHO
ROAM
YOUR FRIEND BLAISE THE POET
AND HIS WHITE
DOG

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT
135th STREET BRANCH 103 WEST 135th ST.

ROY W. JEN
31.10.1911
YRABILL

CONTENTS

The Gift of Swiftness, 1

Why No One Ever Carries the Alligator Down to
the Water, 5

The Bird From the Waterfall, 13

An Idiotic Trade!, 21

The Song of the Mice, 29

The Lazy Judge, 35

Baranga, the Tree Frog, 43

Fine, Fine!, 69

Possible—Impossible, 85

The Wind, 101

Why? Why? Or The
Adventure of a Tiny
Little Chicken Who
Had Not Yet Been
Born, 109



The Gift of Swiftness

The Gift of Swiftness

THE hare lived care-free. He was proud of his gift of slyness which enabled him to hold sway over all the other animals. He was a good adviser, and they always listened to what he said. One day the hare went to Mou-Oungou the Creator, and said to him:

"Mou-Oungou, I already possess your charm for slyness, now give me a charm for swiftness, too."

"What do you want to do with it?" Mou-Oungou asked.

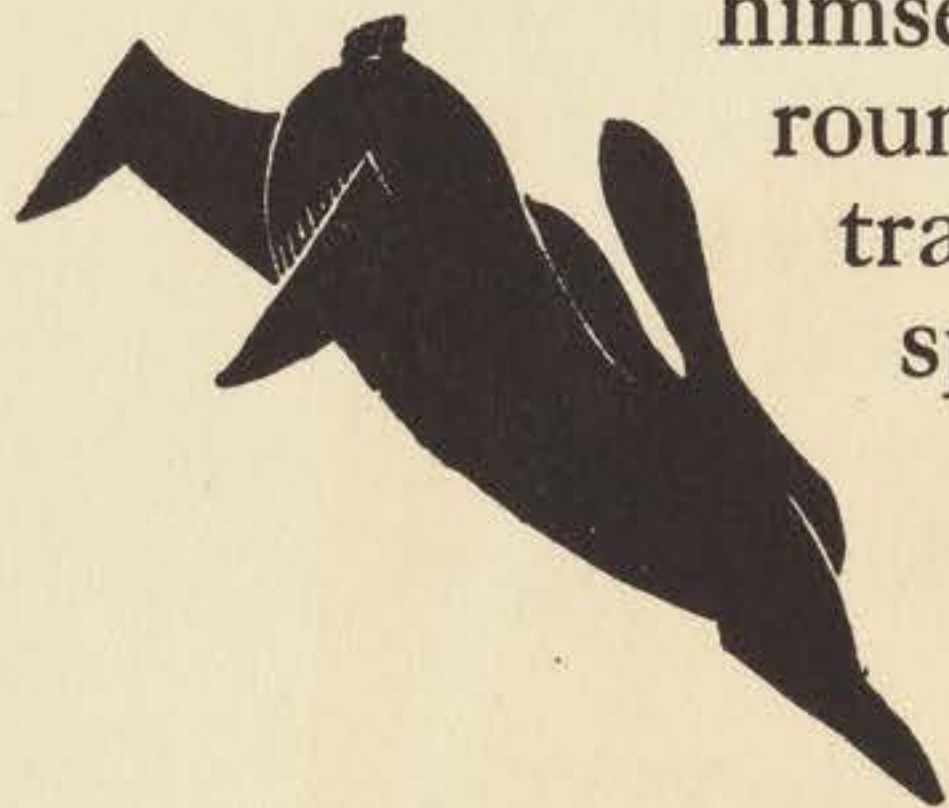
"I don't know," said the hare. "I would like to run all over the world, and look about me."

Immediately his hindquarters began to lengthen out, and there was the hare skipping all about the plain, taking great leaps, trying his new gift of swiftness.

As he jumped about in the sunlight, all at once he caught sight of the shadow of his long ears. He took the shadow for

a great beast with two horns, and fled in terror.

He ran as fast as he could. He took enormous leaps, sudden springs sidewise, doubled back on his own tracks, flung himself this way and that, turned round again trying to confuse his trail, set off once more at full speed, darting straight as an arrow, turned head-over-heels, rolled, picked himself up, ran again—over and over—but the great horned beast still ran beside him.



At last he took shelter in the depths of a thicket, and the cause of all his terror vanished.

As soon as the trembling hare had recovered a little from his fright, he thought: "If I hadn't had those two agile legs I should never have escaped that terrible beast!"

So he went back to Mou-Oungou and said to him:

"Mou-Oungou, your charm for swiftness saved my life. Give me another one, too, for my front legs, so that I can always



escape death!"

But Mou-Oungou, the Creator, drove him away, saying: "Get out! You are too cowardly!"

And he gave him a blow on the mouth.

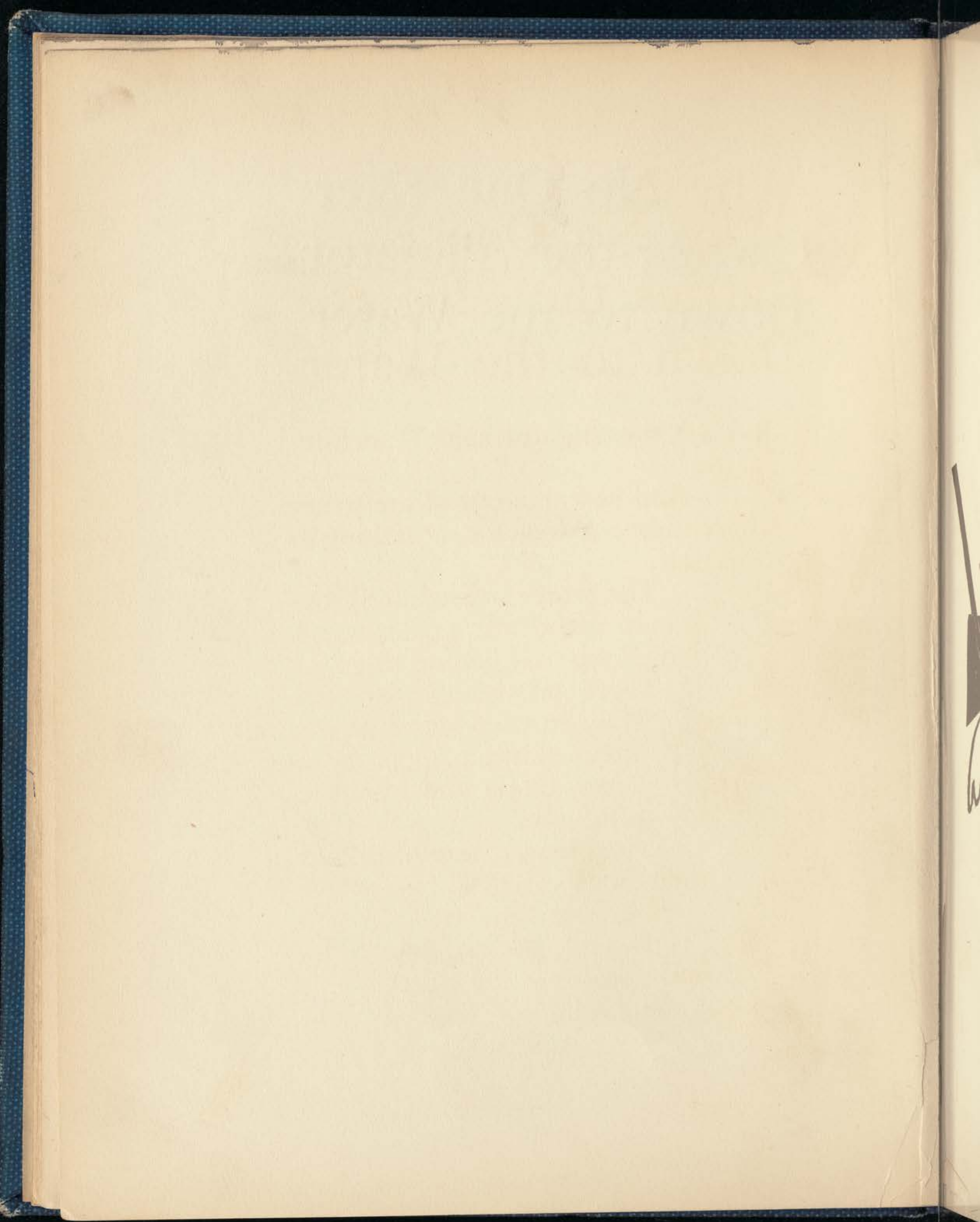
That is how the hare came to have a split lip, and why everything that he says



has a double meaning.

Once upon a time the hare was neither timid nor boastful; he was proud and cunning, and his word was obeyed. Now when he speaks he runs away, and when he runs he is terrified, and everyone makes fun of him, even his shadow, that tall shadow that barks noiselessly in his ear and tracks him down to his death.

Why No One Ever
Carries the Alligator
Down to the Water



Why No One Ever Carries the Alligator Down to the Water

BAMA, the alligator, said: "I am hungry!"

And he came out of the water with his children to look for something to eat.

The water immediately began to withdraw, until it was a long, long way behind them.

There on the dry ground they yawned with hunger, their mouths open, wide open, Bama and his little alligators.

Crick! Crack! they snapped their jaws.

A hunter came by.

He said: "Bama, how-come you got out of the water?"

The alligator said: "I came



to take a walk, to take a walk with my children, and all at once the water went down and it went a long, long way off behind us. Crick! Crack! I'm hungry!"

The hunter said: "If you weren't such an ungrateful creature I would go and put you back in the water, you and your children."

"Oh, yes!" cried Bama. "Carry us back to the water quick, me and my children!"

So the hunter made a rope from the bark of a tree, and tied the alligator up so that he could carry him on his head, and he tied the little alligators as well, by their tails, so he could carry them more easily to the river's edge.

When he reached the edge of the water the hunter asked: "Shall I put you down here, Bama?"

The alligator replied: "Go a little further!"

The man took three steps into the water, and then said:

"Shall I put you down here, Bama?"

The alligator said: "Just a little further!"

The man took three more steps. Now

the water was halfway up his legs. He said:

"Alligator, alligator, shall I put you down here?"

Bama said: "Yes, put me down here."

The hunter set him down in the water and untied him, him and his children.

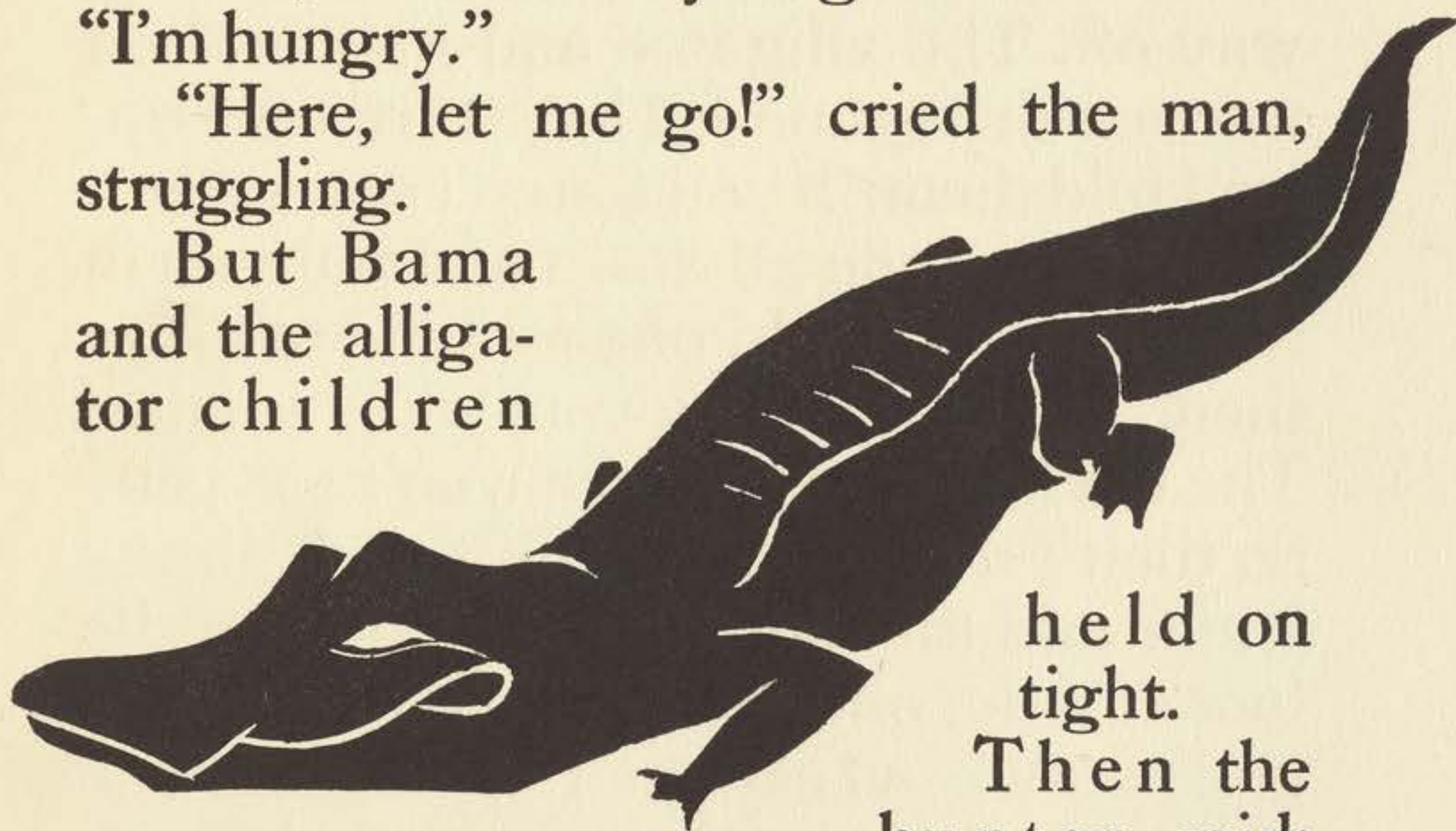
Immediately the alligator caught hold of him by one foot. "Now I've got you!" he cried, "What a fine mouthful! I'm hungry. I'm going to eat you!"

"Let me go!" cried the man.

"No, I won't let you go!" said Bama. "I'm hungry."

"Here, let me go!" cried the man, struggling.

But Bama and the alligator children



held on tight.

Then the hunter said:

"Bama, I maintain that you are an ungrateful creature!"

And he kept quiet. The water was already up to his middle. The hunter stood quite still, and he did not speak again.

A little hare came by. He said: "Hunter, why are you standing so still, there?"

The man answered: "Bama has hold of me."

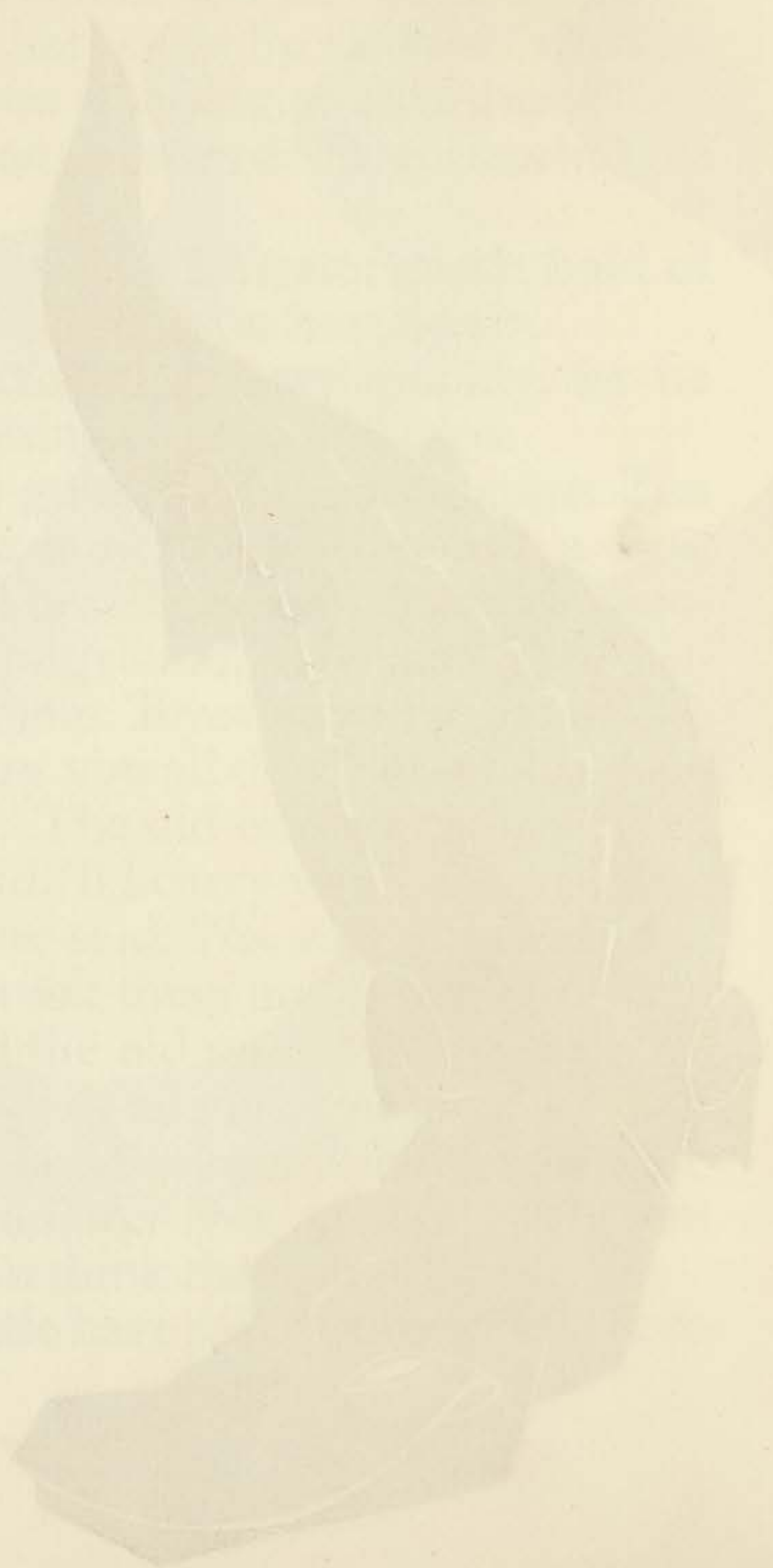
"Why did the alligator catch hold of you?" asked the little hare again.

The man spoke very quickly, for he was beginning to get frightened.

"I had gone to the river's edge. The water had gone down, and was a long way off. The alligator and his children were on dry ground. They were very upset. I told them: 'If you weren't so ungrateful I'd carry you all down and put you in the water.' The old one told me to carry them. I said: 'If I carry you, you'd eat me.' The old one said: 'No, we won't eat you.' So then I took them and put them in the water and the old one caught me by the foot and the others have hold of my legs, and now when I cry out 'Let me go, let me go!' they answer 'No, we shan't let you go!' Do you think that's fair?"

The little hare said: "Were you able to





carry that great big alligator on your head?"

The hunter said: "Yes, the big one!"

"With all his children?"

"With all his children."

"You were able to carry them right down to the water?"

"Yes, I was able to."

"I don't believe it," said the little hare. And he shouted: "You, Bama, is it true what he says?"

The alligator replied: "It is the truth."

The little hare said to the man: "You know, I can't believe it unless I see you do it!" And he called to the alligator:

"Bama, will you let him carry you on his head again?"

The alligator said: "I'm quite willing!"

Then the hunter bound the alligator with his rope so as to carry him on his head again, and he gathered up all the little alligator children and tied them by their tails, and so carried them easily to the place where he had found them the first time, a long way off, beyond the water, far from the river's edge.

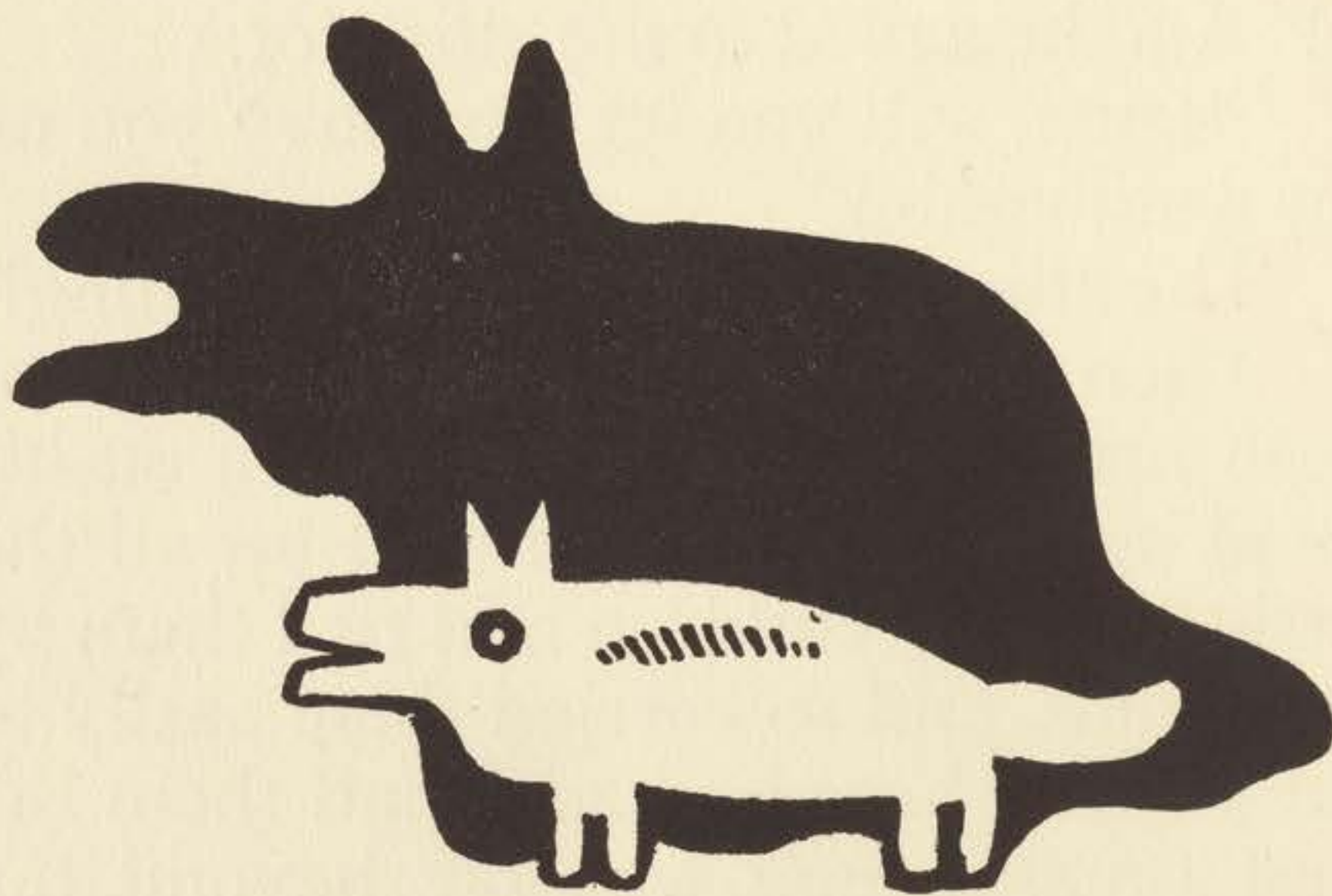
When he got there he was just about

to untie them, so as to put them down again in the same spot, when the little hare said:

“Kill them, stupid, and eat them!”

So the man killed Bama and all the little alligators. He carried the flesh to his house and there he told the story of what had happened to him.

Ever since then, no one will carry an alligator down to the water any more. They are too ungrateful.



The Bird From
the Waterfall

The Bird From the Waterfall

THERE was once a child who set a snare under a root and caught a bird, a fine bird, the bird from the waterfall.

Good.

He plucked it, he cooked it, he ate it.

When he had eaten it he came back, he set the snare under the same root and once more he caught the same bird, the bird from the waterfall. Then he ran home to put it in a cage, but his mother sent him back to the fields again to watch the young crop.

The child said to her: "Mother, roast this bird for me."

"Yes," she said.

The child went back to the fields and began to beat his drum, to frighten the other birds away.

Good.

Meanwhile the mother killed the bird, the fine bird, plucked it, roasted it and ate it all up herself, without leaving any. When the child came home he asked for his bird.

"I have eaten it," she told him.
Then he began to cry.
Good.

"Mother, give me my bird, the bird I killed under the root, near the waterfall, under the root!"

His mother gave him some corn.
Good.

The child went and hid his corn on a tree-trunk, high up in the cleft of a dead tree, and when the white ants had eaten it he said to them:

"Ants, give me back my corn! Give me the corn my mother gave me. My mother ate the bird that I killed under the root, by the waterfall, under the root."

The white ants made him some earthen pots.
Good.

The child took the earthen pots. He

went and put them in the brook underneath where the running water came down, so as to draw some water. But when the falling water had broken his earthen pots he said to it:

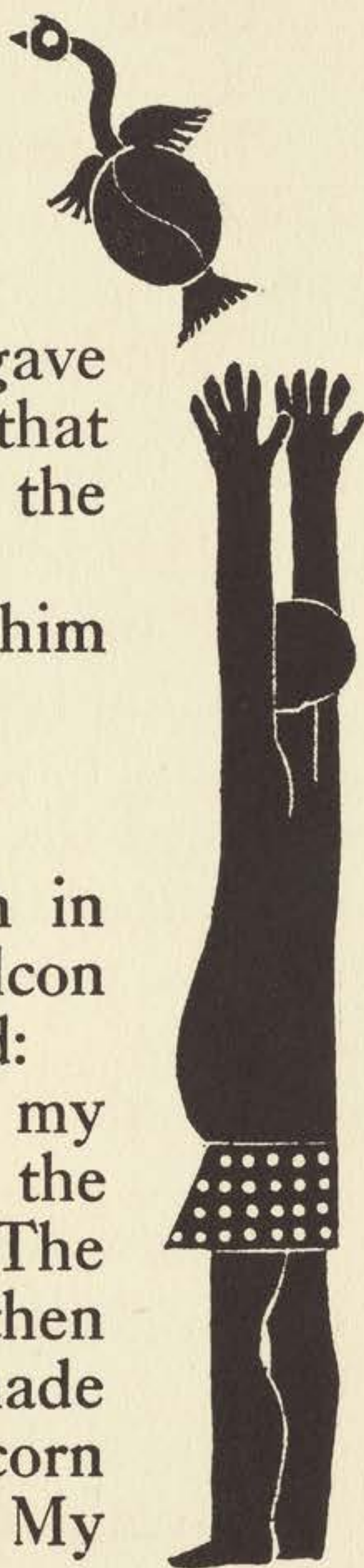
"Water, give me back my earthen pots! Give me the earthen pots the white ants made me. The ants ate the corn that my mother gave me. My mother ate the bird that I killed under the root, by the waterfall, under the root."

The running water gave him a fish.

Good.

The child held the fish in his hand, and when a falcon snatched it from him he said:

"Falcon, give me back my fish! Give me the fish that the running water gave me. The running water broke the earthen pots that the white ants made for me. The ants ate the corn that my mother gave me. My



mother ate the bird that I killed under the root, by the waterfall, under the root.

The falcon plucked out a feather.
Good.

"This feather is mine," said the child. But the wind carried it away from him. Then the child said:

"Wind, give me back my feather! Give me the feather that the falcon plucked for me. The falcon ate the fish that the running water gave me. The running water broke the earthen pots that the white ants made for me. The ants ate the corn my mother gave me. My mother ate the bird that I killed under the root, by the waterfall, under the root."

The wind shook him down some coanuts.

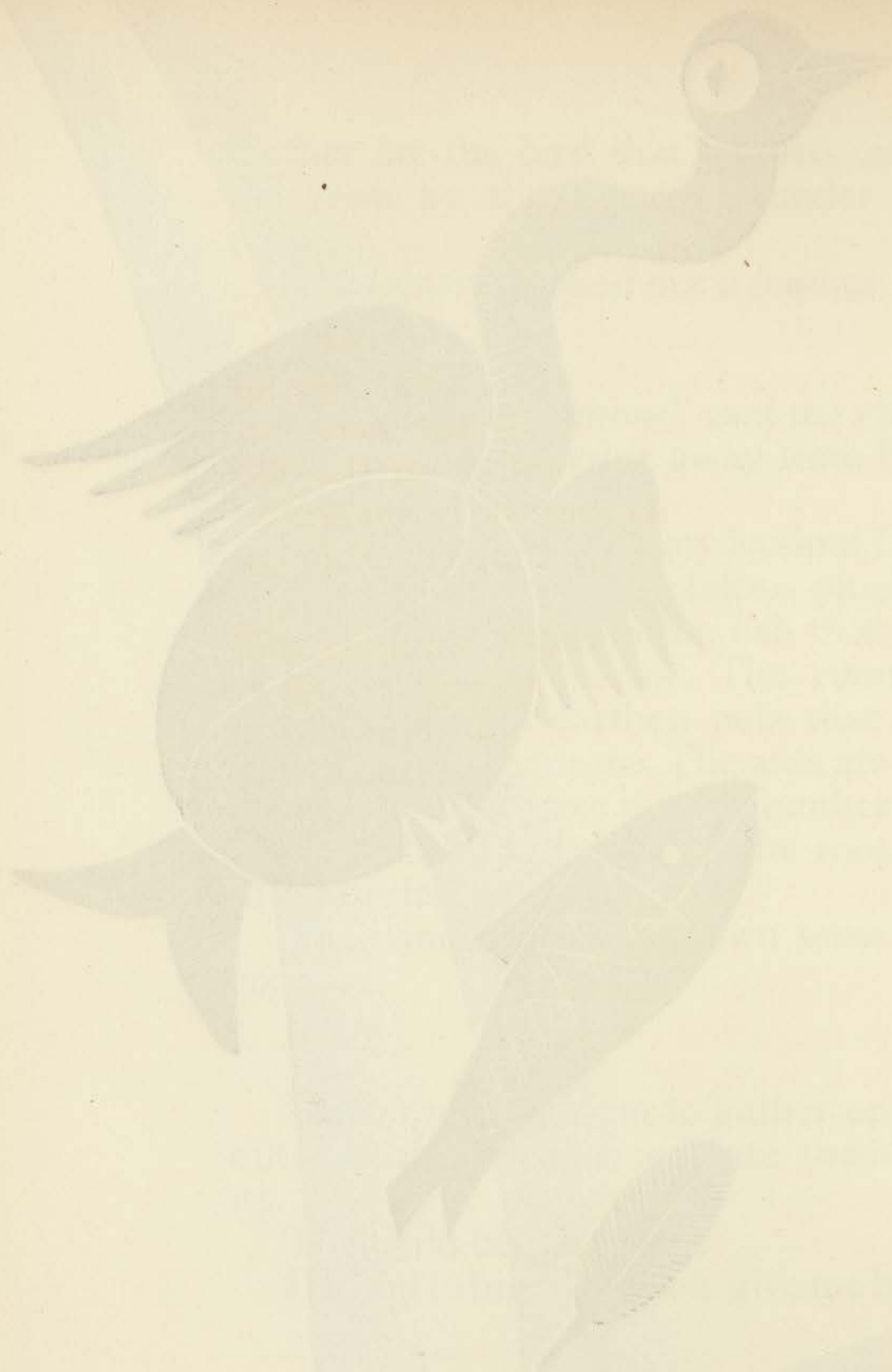
Good.

When the child went to gather up the nuts a baboon came and ate them all up.

The child began to cry.

He said to him: "Baboon, give me back





my nuts that the wind shook down for me! The wind carried away the feather that the falcon plucked for me. The falcon ate the fish that was given me by the running water. The running water broke the earthen pots that the white ants made for me. The ants ate up all the corn my mother gave me. My mother ate the bird that I caught under the root, by the waterfall, under the root. One can't even amuse oneself any more!"

The baboon burst out laughing and said: "I haven't anything to give you!"

So then the child caught him with a rope, and carried him home quickly to eat him.

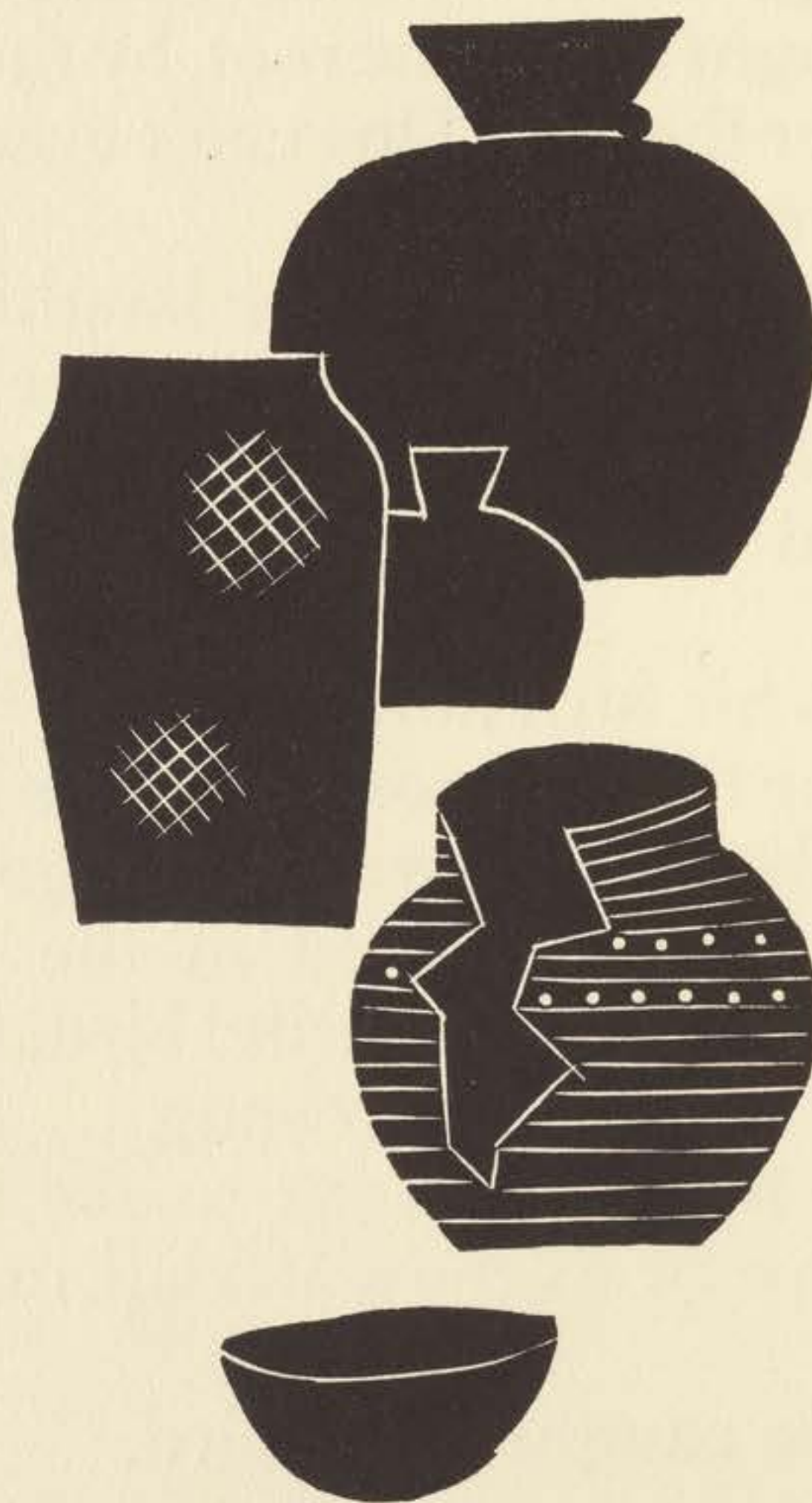
It was his turn now!

But the fire had gone out. The hut was empty. His mother was no longer there. She had been drowned in the stream, where there was a beautiful bird, the bird from the waterfall, that sang . . .

Then the child went to set a snare under the root, by the waterfall, under the root.

And he caught a fine bird.
Good.

But the child woke up.
He had been dreaming.
So he began to beat his drum to
frighten away the other birds, all the
birds that flew down from the sky to eat
up the growing corn.
“Ah, but it’s hot!” he said.



An Idiotic Trade!



An Idiotic Trade!

IN a certain large village there lived a man who trained monkeys and a man who trained a deer. It was the only thing they could do to pass the time. True, it wasn't working, but what an idiotic trade! One trained monkeys and the other trained a deer, and they didn't know how to get enough to eat from one day to another, for they were both poor and they each wasted their time, one in training monkeys and the other in training a deer.

One day these two men happened to

meet, and they became friends, very good friends.

They laughed.

The owner of the monkeys said to the other:

"Come home with me and see my monkeys."

So the other went with him to his hut, but they found that the monkeys weren't at home.

"Well, friend," said the other man, "where have they gone?"

"They have gone to eat their dinner."

"Lucky beggars! Call them, just to see."

The man called them. They all came running at his call, and their master said proudly: "You see, there are my monkeys!"

"Ah, if only I had come across them in the forest I should have shot them, they look so fat!" said the visitor. "Oh, if I only had my arrows here! Because I'm hungry, I'm so hungry! I'd like to shoot one of them."

"Don't talk so loudly, friend," said the





owner of the monkeys. "They'll hear you."

At these words the monkeys ran off with a single leap and went to hide themselves in the depths of the forest.

The visitor said: "Come to my house and see the deer that I have trained."

The other went, saw the deer, and said: "How fine he is! If I only had a spear! Friend, is that really meat that you set before me?"

At these words the deer leapt away with a bound and ran to hide in the depths of the thicket.

"You have frightened my deer away now, with your careless words!" exclaimed the deer's owner.

"And you, didn't you scare my monkeys off just because you couldn't hold your tongue!" cried the owner of the monkeys.

"Shut up, you chatterbox!"

"You shut up, you envious fool!"

"You began it all!"

"No, it was you!"

"It was you!"

"It was you!"

"You!"

"You!"

And the two men rushed at one another and began to fight. Bing! They both rolled over into the creek, each shouting out that the other was a thief.

The village folk dragged them both before the king.

The king asked: "Who began all this?"

And then, without even giving them time to open their mouths, he added: "It is only just that each one should repay the other."

Now, neither of these two men owned anything at all. So they paid each other in beer.

Each returned to his own hut; each set about brewing beer. Then each one invited the other, and so, sometimes at one hut, sometimes at the other, they exchanged visits, when each drank the other's beer with a great deal of ceremony. This went on for eight days. They drank so much dolo, which is a light sour beer, that the two became fast friends again.

The affair was over. They felt very pleased with themselves.

The first one said: "What an idiotic trade ours is!"

"Yes," said the other, "it's a silly occupation!"

Agreed at last, they fell into each other's arms in congratulation.

And they began drinking more of the sour beer.

They laughed, and in the midst of their laughter asked one another: "But what is there left to do now? What can we do?"

The first said: "For my part, I don't know how to work!"

"Nor I, either!" said the other.

How funny it was! They laughed and laughed till they held their bellies!

Ever since that day they have been inseparable. One comes across them everywhere in the village, but they never go into any of the villagers' houses; they stay outside, roaring with laughter as they stagger around holding one another up, or prop themselves side by side against the fence of the cattle-park. They

are poorer and more wretched than ever.
They live with the flies. They are both
perfectly contented.
What an idiotic trade!



The Song of the Mice

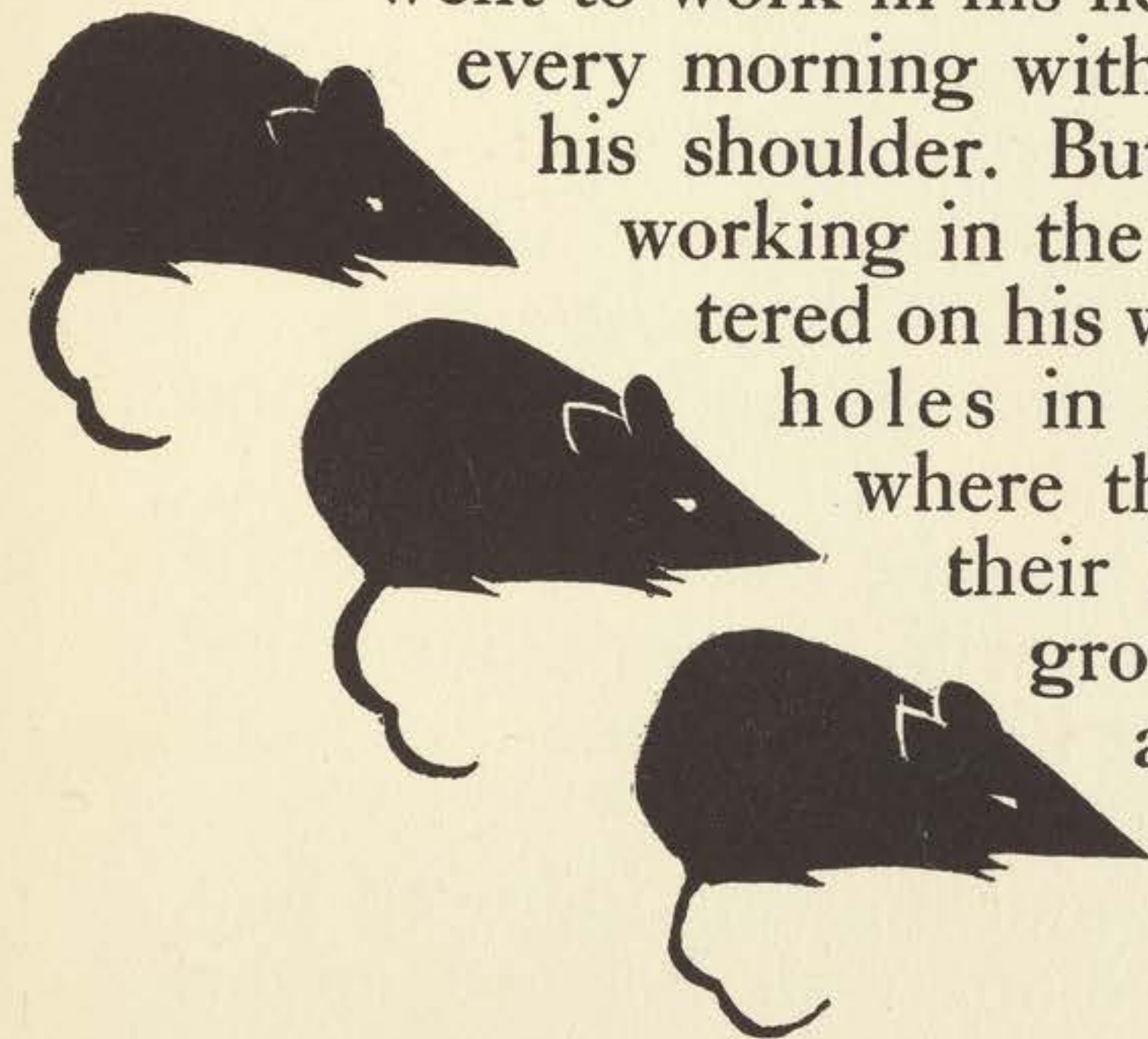
The Song of the Mice

LISTEN, all of you to the song of the mice! It is sad and it will make you very melancholy, but at the same time it will make your head move up and down, right and left, so that you begin to dance.

Oh, don't listen, don't listen too long to the song of the mice!

Once upon a time . . .

There was a poor husbandman who went to work in his field. He went every morning with his hoe on his shoulder. But instead of working in the field he loitered on his way to make holes in the places where the mice dig their long underground tunnels, and he put his ear to the hole to listen to



what was happening down underground.

As soon as a mouse came up to see what he was doing there, he killed it.

He killed over a thousand that way. He killed them, but he didn't eat them.

Then the mouse people began to mourn. All the mice met together and began to sing a tune, a beautiful tune which said:

Death is taking all of us, all of us this year;
Where can we dwell together, happy and free from
fear?

And they sang, sometimes sadly, sometimes joyously.

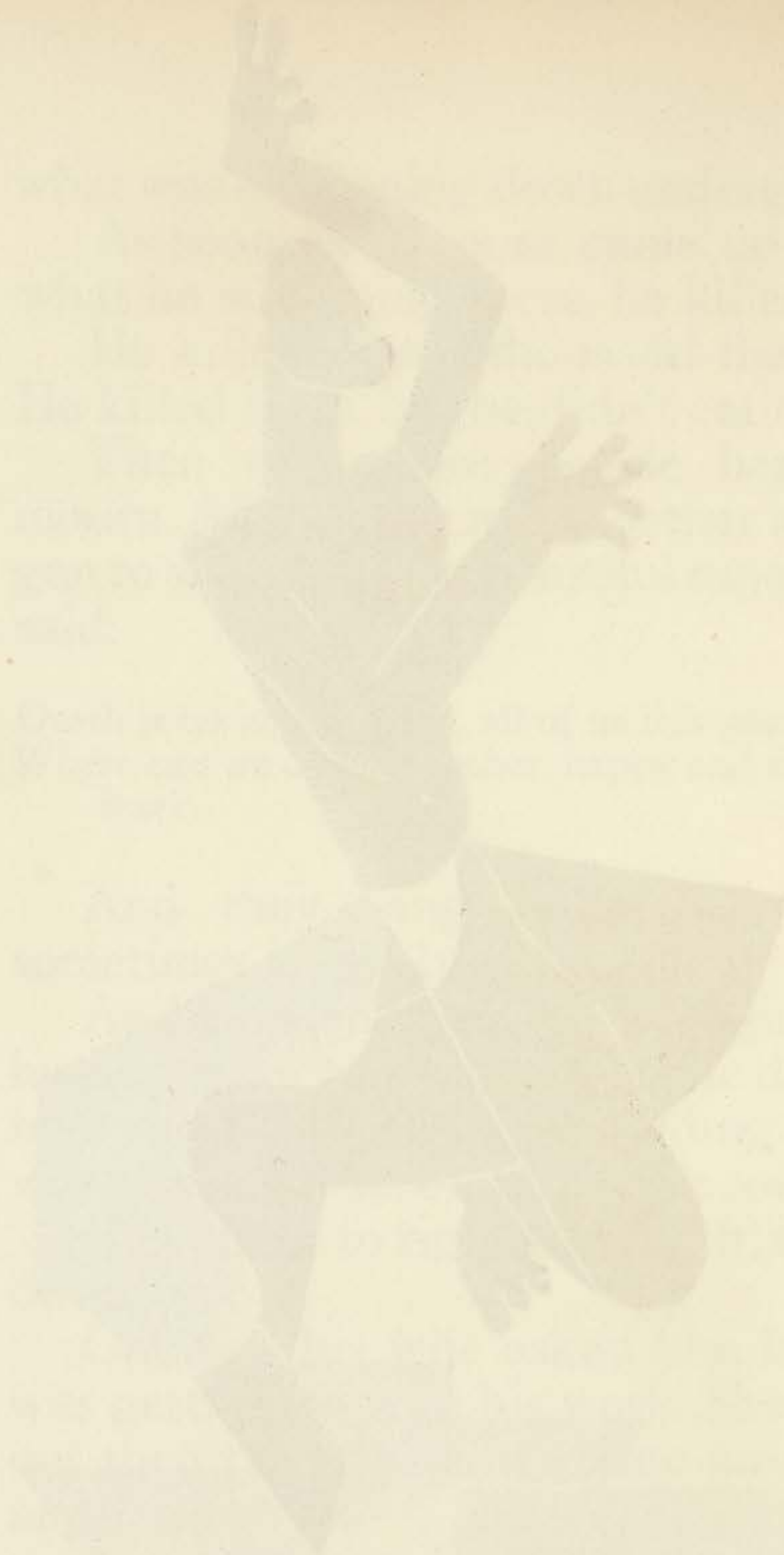
As he listened to their singing the husbandman began to dance. He danced, now sadly, now gaily, according to the words, the words of the mouse song.

He danced to right and to left, up and down.

One day his wife asked him how he was getting on with his work. She found out then that he hadn't done any work at all.

The next morning she followed him. The man set out with his hoe on his





shoulder. The woman hid herself so as to watch what he did all day long. But instead of working the man dug holes to listen what was happening underground, and as soon as a mouse came up to see what he was doing he caught it and killed it. Then all the mice began to weep and to sing their song, the beautiful song which said:

Death is taking all of us, all of us this year;
Where can we dwell together, happy and free from
fear?

And hearing this the man began to dance. He danced to right, he danced to left, he leaped into the air and fell back again; he danced round and round, sometimes gaily, sometimes sadly, according to the words, the words of the song.

His wife, who couldn't understand the reason of all this, only saw that her husband was ruining all their crops; he jumped on the rice, he stamped on the millet, every time he leaped in the air he gave a kick to the potatoes, even the grass was all trampled down by this husband who kept dancing round and round.

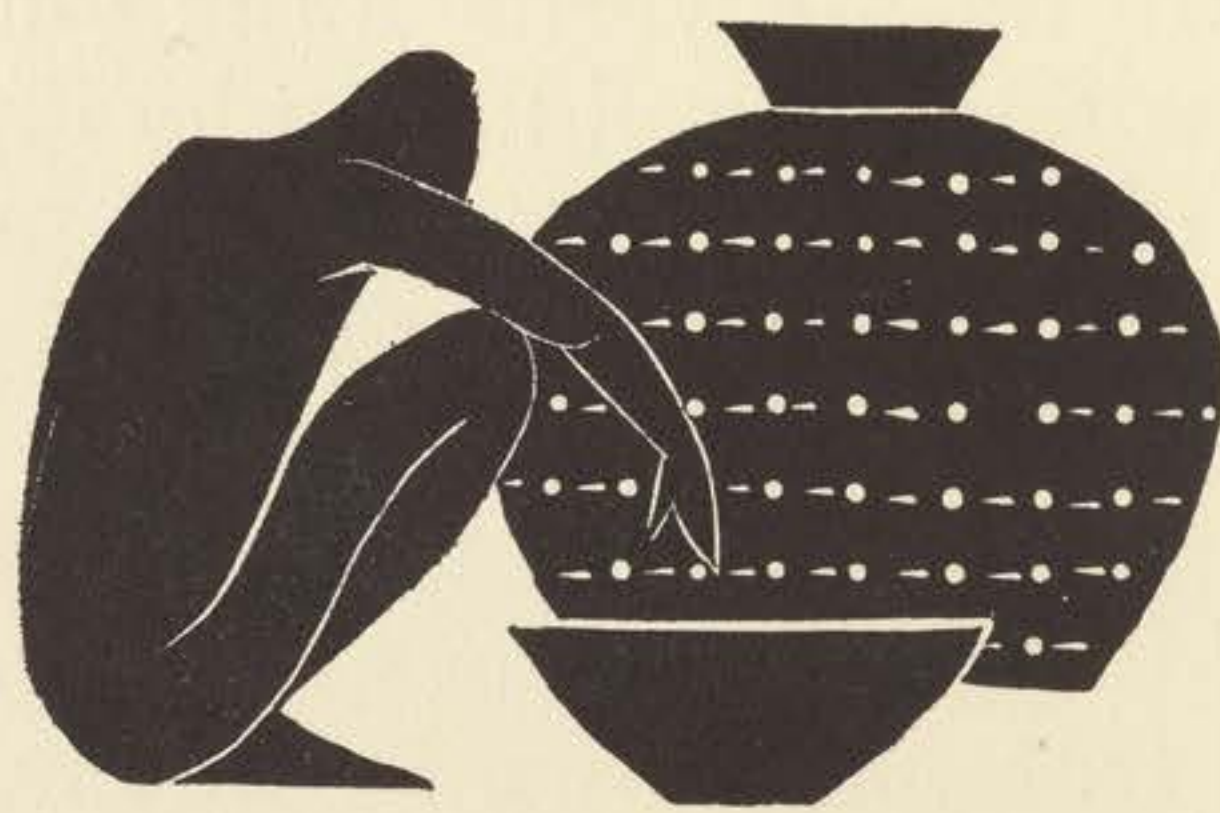
Then the woman grew very angry. She rushed out from her hiding-place and shouted: "Ah, so this is the way you help me, is it? Ah, this is the way you hoe the field! Well, I have just about enough of working for you and keeping you in idleness! Farewell, good-for-nothing!"

She gave him a box on the ear and ran off, shouting again: "Goodbye!"

The man came to his senses. He was all alone.

When he went back to the house that evening there was no fire lighted.

So then he sat himself down among the ashes and began to cry, saying: "Who, oh, who is going to cook my soup for me, now?"



The Lazy Judge

The Lazy Judge

ONCE upon a time, they say, this is what happened:

The mouse had gnawed the tailor's clothes. The tailor went to the baboon, who was the judge at that time, and who was always asleep. He woke him up, and made his complaint as follows:

"Baboon, open your eyes! Come, wake up, I want you to look at this; there are holes everywhere! It is the mouse who has been destroying my clothes this way, but she says it isn't true; she declares it's the cat. The cat says silyly that it isn't his fault; it must be the dog. The dog denies everything and insists that the stick did it. The stick throws the blame on the fire and insists: 'It's the fire, the fire! The fire did it, the fire!' The fire won't listen to anything. 'No, no, no, it wasn't me, it was the water!' he says. The water pretends to know nothing of the whole business, but she insinuates all the same that the elephant is the guilty one. The elephant is furious and blames it all on the ant. The

ant gets red in the face, rushes everywhere, gossiping and stirring everyone up, and between the lot of them, with all their shouting and quarrelling, I can't find out who, who, has torn my clothes! They have made me waste my time, run here, run there, wait, hang about, argue, and in the end I get no satisfaction! O Baboon, just open your eyes and look! There are holes everywhere! What will become of me? I am ruined!" the tailor complained.

He hadn't so very much to lose, all the same, this tailor, for he was a poor man with a tall skinny wife at home and a lot of children, boys and girls, and a spiteful old woman as well who always stuck there on his doorstep; not his grandmother, no, nor his wife's mother, nor yet a stranger, she belonged to the family all right—an old witch who had taken possession of him and his and who tormented them all the time; she had long teeth, and a knife-blade instead of a spine down her back—and her name was Hunger. Hunger lived at his door, and the harder the tailor worked the faster Hunger snatched



everything from him; she forced her way shamelessly into the house, emptied his cooking-pots and calabashes, beat the children, squabbled with his wife and quarrelled with him till the poor tailor didn't know where to turn. And now the mouse came and gnawed all the clothes belonging to his customers, and there was nothing left but holes!

Truly he was much to be pitied, this tailor, and he felt very discouraged, and that's why he went to the baboon, who was judge at that time, the baboon who was always asleep.

"O Baboon, open your eyes and look! There are holes everywhere!"

The baboon sat bolt upright. He was big and fat and shining with health. He listened to the tailor, stroking his fur the while. He wanted terribly to go to sleep again. All the same he called together all those who were concerned in the case. He was in a hurry to get everything through so he could go back to his nap.

The mouse came to accuse the cat; the cat pointed to the dog; the dog shouted at the stick; the stick blamed it on the fire;



the fire turned
a g a i n s t the
water; the wa-
ter a c c u s e d

the elephant; the elephant, enraged, put the whole blame on the ant, and the ant—the ant came too, the ant, scarlet with fury, the ant with the evil tongue, she came to poison the whole affair. She ran about, held forth, gesticulated, retailed gossip, scandal and lies, set one against another, compromised everybody, and naturally, managed to make herself out quite innocent.

There was a fine to-do! Everyone shouted at once, there was so much confusion, and the ant bestirred herself to such effect, that the baboon grew dizzy. He was just about to turn everybody out and settle back comfortably to sleep in his hut when the tailor recalled him to his duty by shouting out above all the racket:

“O Baboon, open your eyes and look! There are holes everywhere!”

The baboon was tired of the whole thing. What could he do? And it was such a tangle! And then he was so drowsy, he

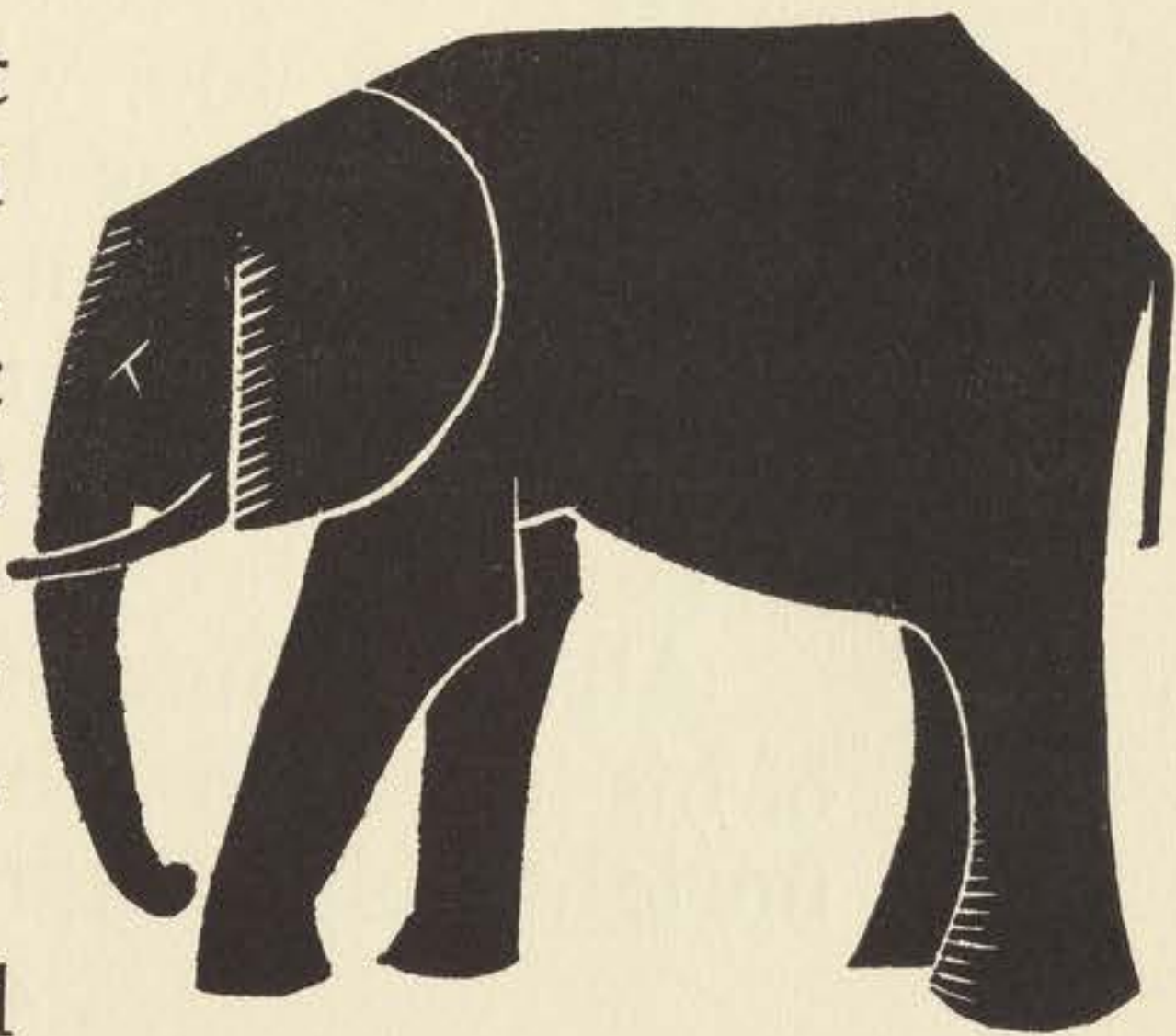
wanted so much to go to sleep. All these people could just as well leave him in peace and settle their own troubles for themselves. He sat bolt upright. He was big and fat and shining with health. He looked round on everyone, stroking his fur. His only thought was to sink back to his nap.

So he said:

"I, the baboon, supreme judge of all the animals and men, I command you: punish yourselves!

Cat, bite the mouse!
Dog, bite the cat!
Stick, strike the dog!
Fire, burn the stick!
Water, quench the fire!
Elephant, drink the water!
Ant, sting the elephant!
Now go! I have spoken!"

The animals went out and the baboon went to sleep again. And ever since that time the animals can't stand one another. Their only thought is to do one another harm.



The ant stings the elephant,
The elephant drinks the water,
The water quenches the fire,
The fire burns the stick,
The stick beats the dog,
The dog bites the cat,
The cat eats the mouse . . .
And so forth . . .

But the tailor, you say; how about the tailor? Who paid the tailor for his torn clothes?

Ah, yes, the tailor . . .

Well, the baboon had simply forgotten all about him; that's why man always goes hungry.

No matter how hard he works, the baboon is always asleep.

Man is still waiting for justice.

He is always hungry.

But then, too, whenever the baboon wants to go out he has to run very quickly, on all fours, so the man won't recognize him. And that's why, ever since that day, you always see him running on all fours.

All on account of that stupid decision of his he has lost the faculty of walking upright, bolt upright.

Baranga, the Tree Frog

(from The African Saga)

Baranga, the Tree Frog



I.

IT was like this. One fine day the gazelle got some beer ready and called all her friends to help her dig her field. They went to work on the hillside, and they dug the whole field. Then the gazelle said to the tree-frog:

“Suppose we play at running races on our way back to the house? The one who outstrips the other and gets there first must turn back again and bring a pot of beer to the one who is left behind.”

They joined in the race. The tree-frog crawled on the ground, the gazelle

sprang in the air and in a moment had reached the hut. She returned with a jug of beer, stopped the tree-frog on the road and said: "Here! Drink! I have beaten you."

"That's right," said the other. "Yes, you beat me."

And they began to drink the beer.

II.

When they had nearly finished the tree-frog said to her friend: "Since you say you run faster than I do, let's play at racing again." The gazelle said: "All right. Where shall we race?" The tree-frog answered: "I'll show you where we'll race."

The tree-frog went into the hut; then the gazelle made a rampart all around and stopped up the doorway, and the tree-frog said: "Take a light and set fire to the hut, since you outstripped me in the race." And the gazelle really set fire to the hut.

Then the tree-frog called out: "Hi, gazelle, where can I take refuge?" She answered: "Get into the big saucepan!"

"But there are others already in the big saucepan! Where can I take refuge?"

"Get into the big basket!"

The tree-frog answered: "But there are others already in the big basket!" Then the gazelle said: "All right, then die! Burn up with the house and turn into a little bit of cinder!"

Now, the tree-frog crept into the earth; she dug a little crack and hid herself. As for the hut, it burned up completely and disappeared.

The rain began to fall. . . . The tree-frog came out again, together with her brothers, her wives and her children. Her village grew big and formed a large circle. The gazelle said to her: "Oh, my dear friend, you ran faster than I did! You beat me!" She went to sleep somewhere else, a long way off, for she feared the neighbourhood of the big tree-frog village. And it was the tree-frog who gave food to the gazelle and became her superior.

Then the gazelle said to her: "That's all right; that's as it may be! But now I want to go into the hut too; set fire to it!" The tree-frog said: "Not at all! Because

you are a great jumper, whereas I live on the ground." But the gazelle insisted, and said: "No, no! I myself want it! If I burn with the hut, what does it matter?" The tree-frog replied: "If you really want it, all right! I was only taking pity on you."

So then the gazelle went into the hut and took her horns with her. The tree-frog surrounded the hut with thorns and closed it tightly. Then she took a light and set fire to it. It took fire and burned. The gazelle cried: "Mother tree-frog, I am burning! Where can I take refuge?" The tree-frog said: "Get into the big saucepan!" She said: "There are others already in the big saucepan." "Then get into the big basket!" "There are others already in the big basket!" The tree-frog said: "Very well, then! Fry up and turn into a little bit of cinder! May there be nothing left of you! Disappear and take your horns with you!" The gazelle looked at the ground; she tried to dig it up with her horns, the fire came and burned her up! She lay on her back, her legs stretched out . . . and her horns frizzled up and were consumed!

III.

So then the tree-frog began by cutting them off; then she put the gazelle in the shade, in the village square, and cut her up; she cut off her four legs, the front ones and the back ones, and made a trumpet out of the bones. Then she went off, far, far away along the road, and left her village.

She made a little heap of leaves, climbed on it, and lived there. Presently she felt the rain falling and began to sing:

Bvembvelekou-bvekou!

Antelope, you said, "Let's play at running races!"

Didn't I run better than you, old girl?

IV.

The hare came by and said: "What's this sound of trumpets I hear? Where does it come from, my friend?"

She said to him: "Oh, it comes from over there, far away over by that fig-tree. Go and see."

When he got there he heard the noise again, behind him. A gazelle came, and then another gazelle; the tree-frog said to them: "Go and look over there, there by that big tree!" . . . The lion came too; she said to him: "Go and look over there! Listen to those trumpets; it's over there they're playing them!" . . . The elephant came too, and said: "Where does that noise come from, godmother, daughter of the crocodile?" She answered him the same way.

V.

Now the hippopotamus came by. He stood near; he didn't go over there with the others. He hid himself and said: "This girl here is deceiving us! The sound comes from here . . . quite near her mouth. That heap of leaves now, that she built . . . why is she sitting on it? She built it to play the trumpet from! I see it all very well!" All at once he heard the noise behind him; he returned at a gallop and said to her: "Ah, so this is how you deceive these fine people! Let's hear how the noise sounds near you, tree-frog!"

VI.

He took the trumpet and tried to blow it. But he couldn't blow it; he only went pff, No sound came out. The tree-frog took the trumpet again,



and the sound was perfect. The hippopotamus said to her: "Come now! These trumpets . . . what did you make them out of?"

"With the antelope's bones," she replied. "We played at running races . . . I beat her . . . then I made holes in her bones and now I play the trumpet! Try it yourself!"

He couldn't do it, and he said to her: "Lend it to me, I'll go and play it at home."

The tree-frog refused, saying: "Not at all! For how shall I play it myself? You just want to annoy me."

"And why should I annoy you? You are very smart! Just because you've got a

trumpet you think you're the master, eh?"

The tree-frog replied: "I am not the master, but I object, because you say you want to take my trumpet home with you."

VII.

Now the hippopotamus took away her trumpet, and he made a big river appear. He crossed to the other side and went off with the trumpet. The tree-frog went "Oo-oo!" She struck her lips and said: "We shall meet again, my trumpet and I! As for that water there, that doesn't worry me at all." So then she began to swell herself out; she made herself very big, she swelled out on the water till she reached the other side. She took note of the hippopotamus's tracks and followed them. Then the hippopotamus made a great heat come. The tree-frog passed through this by hiding herself in the sand.

She went on without fear of anything. At sunset she came out, in spite of the wasps and the bees that the hippopota-

mus had sent against her to play a trick on her, so that she would get stung and turn back again. The tree-frog made a gluey liquid all around her body and the wasps flew away. She went on. But he put a swamp in her path. The tree-frog passed the swamp. Then he made a new river. The tree-frog stopped at the ford and built a village; she built it very carefully. Then she took a leaf, got inside it with her assegais, crossed the water and went to take the hippopotamus by surprise. He was lying on his back on the sand, with his legs in the air, warming himself in the sun.

VIII.

The tree-frog came out of her leaf and went up to him, but at the very moment when she was going to kill him with her assegais a bird flew by and said:

“Jump into the water, you hippopotamus with the dumpy legs, you are going to be killed!”

The hippopotamus rushed into the water, going “Boo-oo-oo!” He went into the river with the trumpet. The tree-frog

was afraid to cross the river again, so she stayed there.

The next morning the tree-frog went to spy on the bird, and killed him. She plucked him, she lit a fire with bits of wood, she put the bird on it and burned him all up. She dug a hole, buried his bones, and covered them with sand.

In the morning she found the hippopotamus stretched on his back, unable to play. But at the moment when the tree-frog was about to run him through the bird's feathers came to life again and cried out: "Run away, hippopotamus with the dumpy legs, they are going to kill you!" The hippopotamus went "Boo-oo-oo" in the water; he threw himself in. In the morning the tree-frog returned, burned the grass all around and the feathers were destroyed.

The next day she again found the hippopotamus stretched out. She threw her assegai. All at once a feather rose up, came out from the hollow tree where it had fallen, and cried: "Run away, hippopotamus with the dumpy legs, they will kill you!" The hippopotamus went "Boo-





oo-oo" in the water, and disappeared.

Then the tree-frog went to sleep for three days. The hippopotamus said to himself: "It's all right. She's all tired out now! I'm going to keep her trumpet!" He came out from the water and learned to play all by himself. But the tree-frog was spying on him. In the morning she found him lying on his back, with his legs in the air, playing the trumpet.

She ran him through with three assegais. He said: "My dear friend, let me go, I beg you! Take back your trumpet!" The tree-frog said: "Not at all! I mean to make holes in your bones, and make myself another one!" She killed him, took her trumpet, then she seized her knife and started to cut him up. But lo, the knife broke! She took an axe and sharpened it: as she was about to cut the flesh with it the axe made a nick in itself, instead.

IX.

Now the chameleon came by and said: "Hey, friend! Here are fine provisions! I too am a traveller on the road, but I will

gladly carouse with you and fill my belly in your company!" The tree-frog said to him: "Alas, how can we carouse? Look! I have nothing to cut this beast up with! My little knife and my axes are all broken."

The chameleon replied: "Ho! What does that matter! That's nothing. Suppose we try this?" He took out some splinters of reed from the wallet he carried at his side. "Shall we try?" "Ah," said the tree-frog, "you won't succeed! He is a terribly tough hippopotamus!"

The chameleon took hold of a leg, lifted it, and said: "There! I go zut! See how well this splinter cuts! I can take this leg off for you splendidly!" And in fact he cut up the whole hippopotamus from end to end, down to the very last bit.

Then he said: "For my part, I am going to stay here; I shan't move, my friend! I am your son; here is meat." The tree-frog agreed to this arrangement. She said: "All right." They ate and caroused on the meat and got thoroughly drunk. They even built a village on that very same spot.

X.

Then the tree-frog said to her companion: "I must go away; since you are my son, stay here and take care of my village and my wives." She gathered a bundle of tobacco and gave it to him.

She went and found a pipe and made him a present of it. She also took some pincers and gave them to him, she took a trumpet and gave it to him. Then she laid some eggs on the road and said to the chameleon: "You see these eggs. Let the wayfarer go his way. If he crushes the eggs, he crushes them; if he spares them, he spares them."

She set out. She went to the mountain to forge some assegais for her friend the chameleon, for he was only a simple-minded person and had no weapons.

XI.

The gazelle came by. "Greetings, old chameleon!" He replied: "Greetings!" She asked: "Who do those eggs belong to?"

"They belong to the tree-frog, daughter of the crocodile. She said: 'Let the



wayfarer go his way; if he crushes them, he crushes them; if he spares them, he spares them.' ”

Then the gazelle said: “I don’t want to crush them; I am too much afraid, for she has already killed one of my relatives.” And she ran away in a hurry.

The hare came by and said: “Greetings, chameleon! Whose eggs are those?”

“They belong to the tree-frog, the crocodile’s daughter. She said: ‘Let the wayfarer go his way; if he crushes them, he crushes them; if he spares them, he spares them.’ ”

Then the hare ran away with great leaps, enormous leaps. He went off, a long way off. He fled into the forest.

The big antelope came at a gallop: Hiri, hiri, hiri! till she got quite close to the eggs; there she stopped short, her hooves stretched out, quite close; jumped

backward, and asked the chameleon what that was. When she heard she ran away, saying: "In another moment I should have crushed them!" She went round by the coast, making a great detour, very far away.

XII.

But now the elephant came by. He said: "Greetings, my friend." The chameleon answered in a frightened trembling voice: "Good . . . day!"

He came near, saw the eggs, and said: "Whose eggs are those?"

The chameleon answered, trembling with fear: "They belong to . . . the tree-frog . . . she said . . . let the wayfarer . . . go his way . . . if he crushes them . . . he crushes them . . . if he spares them . . . he spares them. . . ."

Coming within reach of the chameleon the elephant said: "Hand me your pipe!" He gave it to him. The elephant put some tobacco in the pipe, picked up a coal with the pincers, lit the pipe and began to smoke with all his might, making great



clouds. Soon the tobacco was all consumed. When it was finished the elephant poured out the ashes into his hand, crushed them and threw them in the chameleon's eyes. Then he caught hold of him, tore off his limbs and threw them far away, to the four winds. Then he went and broke the eggs! He crushed them, made them into an omelette

underfoot, and left.

XIII.

Now, a wind began to rise in the south. Soon the chameleon's head flew back, then one front leg, then another. They joined themselves to his body again as they were before, his tail came back too and flew into place. He began to revive a little, he began to walk again, and went to look at the eggs . . . he stared at them.

Then he went and got his trumpet, which he found in the crack of the tree, in his village; he began to follow the tree-frog's tracks, singing:

Pchiyo-yo! Tree-frog, daughter of the crocodile . . .

Pchiyo-yo!

They have crushed your eggs!

It was the elephant that crushed them . . .

The elephant with the big bottom!

Pchiyo-yo!

He walked, singing day and night, till he reached the spot where the tree-frog was.

The tree-frog heard him a long way off. She told the blacksmiths to be quiet with their bellows, saying: "Silence! I hear someone coming!" And she called out to him: "Come here!"

She listened, she listened to the song, without saying anything. When he came up to her she asked him all about what had happened, adding: "That's all right! Hurry up with the forging!" They forged all the assegais that were wanted. She gave them to them. She distributed them. She took her own one too. "I will not take leave of you," she said. "I must set out."

XIV.

They started out . . . they even walked during the night. At dawn they were still walking; they walked day and night till they reached their village. They picked up the trail of the elephant, they followed in the direction he had gone and came to a village where they asked: "Did the elephant pass this way?"

They answered: "Yes, he passed through this country a year ago, during the winter."

They went on; they walked and they walked, always following the trail. They came to some other people and questioned them. They replied: "He passed by here some time ago. It was perhaps during the last moon; keep on."

They followed the tracks once more, and went to ask in another village. "He has just passed," they told them. "You won't be long finding him." They kept on their way, asking in other places. They were told: "He was here a moment ago; we just drank some beer with him." They passed by this village, and found him. He

turned back, looked behind him, and saw them. "Hey, friend!" they called to him. "Stop and wait for us!" He would not listen, but went right on.

XV.

Then the chameleon outstripped the tree-frog, caught up with the elephant and said to him: "Wasn't it you who passed by my way and killed me, under the fruit tree in my village?" The tree-frog came up and ran him through with a spear. The chameleon did the same. The elephant broke off a dead branch and threw it at them. The chameleon caught it with his tail, wrapped his tail round it and threw it far away. The tree-frog ran him through again and so did the chameleon. The elephant started to run away. The others ran after him, caught up with him, pierced him again and again. The elephant was vanquished, and died.

XVI.

When he was dead, they began to build a village there, and they cut up his body.

The first who came to do homage to them was the hare. He helped them in their task. The tree-frog, however, said to the chameleon: "I must bury myself in the earth, for there is no rain and I suffer from the heat." The chameleon said: "All right." He made a big drum. Before going underground, the tree-frog ordered them: "Make a fence of thorns all around the village; leave only two gates, and you, hare, must close them at sunset, so that others won't come and eat our provisions that are hanging up in the trees." Then, having said this, she dug herself into the earth.

XVII.

Then the chameleon took his drum and began to beat it everywhere outside the fence; he made a big tour, singing:

Plan! Plan! Pat-a-plan!
All you beasts of the countryside, come and see the
tree-frog,
The tree-frog who is dead!

They all came, and all crowded inside the fence. There were the elephant, the

antelope, the big lizard, the tortoise, the panther and many others! They came eagerly, for the tree-frog had worried them all a great deal with the story of her eggs, and with setting a trap to kill them.

Then the chameleon went and closed the door during the night. He shut all the openings, then he went to wake the tree-frog, saying: "Tree-frog, I tell you! Wake up! Wake up! Come and see what's outside here!" When she had woken up she took her assegais, in the morning, and began to spear all the animals. Some ran away, others stayed. The hare showed his fellow-hares a little hole in the fence by which he was accustomed to go in and out. Several slipped outside through this hole and ran away; the dead remained! Some of the animals were made captive, and the hare also became the slave of the tree-frog.

XVIII.

They cut up all the animals that were killed and gave the tripe to the hare, saying: "Go and wash them in the river." He began by bringing the tripe back. But one

fine day he met his mother, while he was laden with meat. He gave it to her.

Then he scratched himself all over with dead branches, he looked for a thorny spot and threw himself on it. When he reached the village his ears were hanging down pitifully. He said: "Chief, I was caught by an eagle who carried off the tripe!" They replied: "That doesn't matter. It is just a misfortune!"

They gave him some more. He went, and returned with it.

He went another time, but gave it to his mother again, and returned saying: "It was a sparrow-hawk who stole it from me."

Then they sent the elephant, saying: "You go and wash the tripe; we will see if it is carried off by a sparrow-hawk!" While he was on his way to wash it the mother hare arrived, the one who had stayed at home. She was afraid of the elephant and said: "What? So someone else has come to wash the tripe; it is not my son, who usually does that job." The elephant returned to the village with the meat; they said: "Aha! Isn't he bringing

back the tripe! So today there wasn't any sparrow-hawk!"

The elephant said: "I didn't see any sparrow-hawk. All I saw was just a hare."

The tree-frog said to her people: "Go after her and kill her." And so they killed the mother hare.

XIX.

They gave the tripe to the hare again, saying: "Go and wash it." He returned then with his load. Then the tree-frog asked her people: "Did he bring the tripe back?" And then the hare heard them telling how they had killed his mother. He went and sat down in the middle of the smoke and began to weep for her. They asked him: "Why are you weeping?" He said: "It's because I'm sitting in the smoke; it brings the tears to my eyes."

XX.

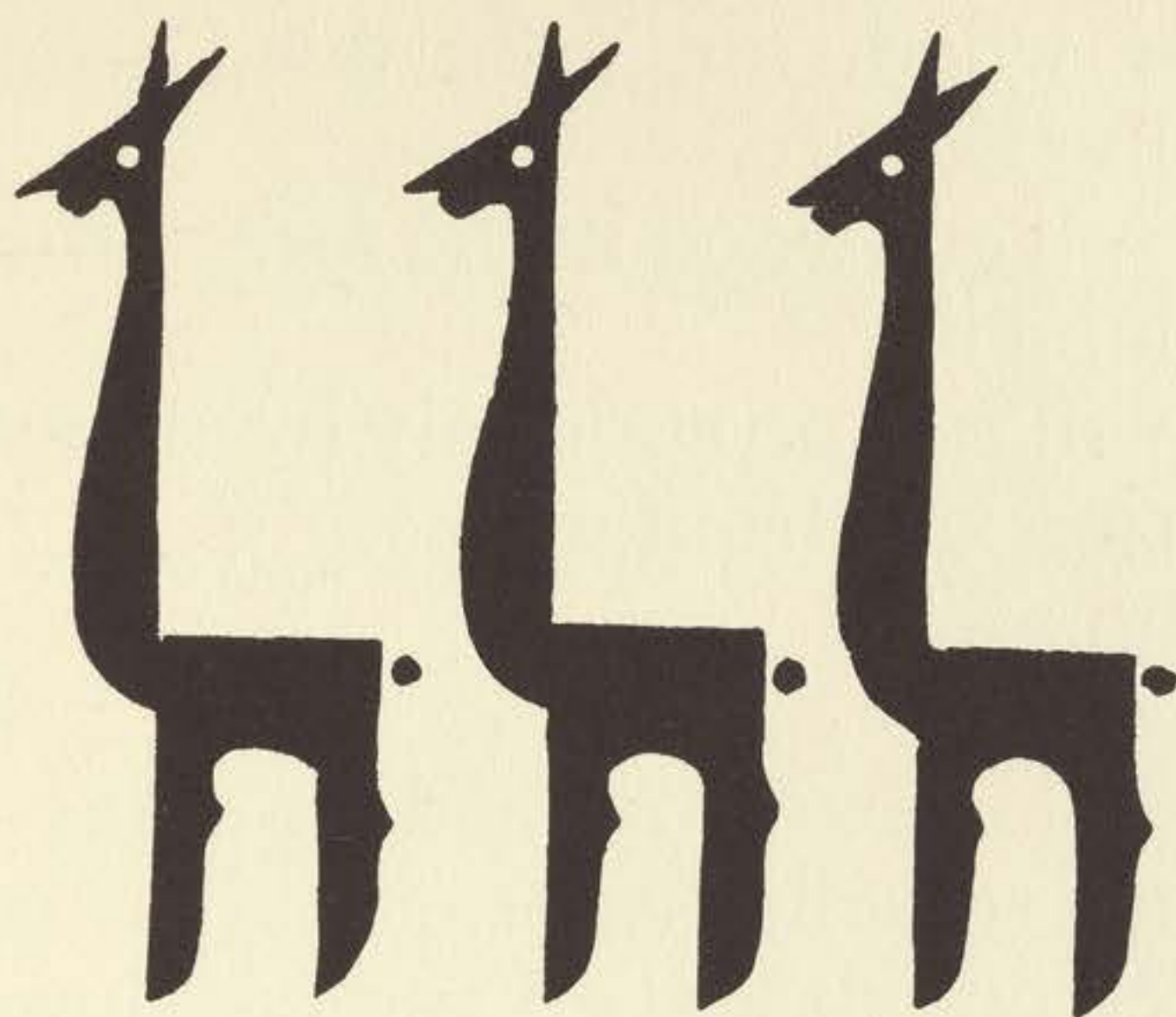
They finished eating the tripe; then they made up their bundles, tied up some loads of meat and all returned with the tree-frog to her village, where she had

played at running races with the gazelle.

On the way she said to the chameleon: "I want to return to the village where I was born. Perhaps you would rather go to your own country?" He replied: "I will never leave you; we will go together." She said to her subjects: "Take your choice also; those who want to leave me must say so." They replied: "We will go with you, our chief; we will never leave you."

So they took up their bundles and followed her. . . .

Fine, Fine!



Fine, Fine!

IF you cut wood in the forest, the echo will claim it.

In the country called Echo-Echo there is a piece of ground covered with brush and trees. It can be seen quite easily from the bearers' path, just before you reach the village of Up!-Up! in a hollow, near the river Glug-Glug. The river is very deep just here, and there are a great many hippopotami and crocodiles. The

jungle is dense, with tall trees growing in it, but no one ever ventures there to gather wood, not even dead wood for kindling the fire.

If you cut wood in the forest, the echo will claim it.

It will rise up suddenly from the river, or spring out from a tree.

Run away!

An old bearer named Sabounyouma, who had travelled a great deal in his time, decided one day to go and cut down this bit of jungle and make a field there for himself. He cried: "See, here's a piece of ground that doesn't belong to anyone; I'm going to dig it up!"

The village people advised him not to do it, but he said he wasn't going to give up his idea. So he took his axe and went into the thicket.

Fine, fine.

He started to clear the brush. But he had scarcely given the first stroke to one of the creepers before:

"Who is cutting my brush?" suddenly

asked the great big voice of Bogey, the Bogey King of all the bogies.

The man was very frightened, but he answered calmly:

"It is I, Sabounyouma; I want to dig my field here!"

"Who gave you permission?" asked the great big voice of Bogey, the Bogey King of all the bogies.

"No one," said the man, terrified.

"Fine!" said Bogey.

And Bogey called his bogies to give a helping hand to Sabounyouma.

A hundred and fifty bogies came, laughing. Each had a thousand arms and a thousand legs. In less than a day all the brush had been cleared.

When the cut brush was quite dry, Sabounyouma came there again to set fire to it. He brought coals in a little pot, blew on them, and made his way into the clearing.

Fine, fine.

He began to set fire to the brush. But the flame had no sooner reached an old stump than:

"Who is there?" suddenly asked the great big voice of Bogey, the Bogey King of all the bogies.

The man was very frightened, but he answered calmly:

"It is I, Sabounyouma; I have come to burn the brush I cut the other day."

"Who gave you permission?" asked the great big voice of Bogey, the Bogey King of all the bogies.

"No one," said the man terrified.

"Fine!" said Bogey.

And Bogey called his bogies to help Sabounyouma.

Three hundred bogies came, laughing. Each had a thousand eyes and a thousand breaths. In less than a day everything had been burned.

When all was burned, Sabounyouma returned to the village and stayed there till winter. When the good people there advised him not to persist, he said he wasn't going to give up his plan. He waited till the rainy season. After the first day's rain he went again to the place to sow his field. Carrying a jar of millet on

his head he made his way into the clearing.

He started to sow his field. But no sooner had he buried the first grain of millet in the earth than:

"Who is there?" suddenly asked the great big voice of Bogey, the Bogey King of all the bogies.

The man was very frightened, but he answered calmly:

"It is I, Sabounyouma; I have come to sow the field that I prepared some time ago."

"Who gave you permission?" asked the great big voice of Bogey, the Bogey King of all the bogies.

"No one," said the man, terrified.

"Fine!" replied Bogey.

And Bogey called his bogies to help Sabounyouma.

Five hundred bogies came, laughing. Each had a thousand gimlets and a thousand augers. In less than a day the whole field was planted.

A week passed, and Sabounyouma returned once more to his piece of ground to pull up the weeds. He brought with him

his hoe, Daba, and he went into the field.
Fine, fine.

He began to weed his field. But no sooner had Daba uprooted the first weed than:

"Who is there?" suddenly asked the great big voice of Bogey, the Bogey King of all the bogies.

The man was very frightened, but he answered calmly:

"It is I, Sabounyouma; I've come to weed the field that I sowed the other day."

"Who gave you permission?" asked the great big voice of Bogey, the Bogey King of all the bogies.

"No one," said the man, terrified.

"Fine," said Bogey.

And Bogey called his bogies to help Sabounyouma.

A thousand bogies came, laughing. Each had ten thousand teeth and a hundred thousand jaws. In less than a day the whole field was weeded clean.

A moon passed, and the millet sprouted. The time came when it had to

be protected from the birds, the birds that drop from the sky and rise from the earth in noisy hungry flocks. Then one must shout, one must throw stones at them, and every day Sabounyouma brought his sling and set to work chasing off the birds.

Fine, fine.

When Sabounyouma went to the field, he went alone. He left his wife and his little boy in the village. One day when he was ill he sent his son in his place. He said to him:

“Here, take my sling. When you shout to frighten the birds off you will hear someone asking: ‘Who is there?’ You must answer: ‘It is I, Sabounyouma’s son!’ ”

He gave him the sling, and added: “Above all, don’t suck the millet stems; if you do, woe betide you!”

The little boy went to the field, alone.
Fine, fine.

The little boy arrived at the field, all alone. But no sooner had he shot his sling at a bird than:

"Who is there?" asked the great big voice of Bogey, the Bogey King of all the bogies.

The child was not at all frightened; he answered:

"It is I, Sabounyouma's son!"

Then Bogey called his people to give the child a helping hand.

Fine.

At midday, the birds were left in peace. Everyone went to lie down and take a few moments' rest. Sabounyouma's son took advantage of this to slip into the plantation and gather some millet stems. He peeled them, broke them and chewed them up. How sweet they were! How good! But he had no sooner sucked one stem than:

"Who is there?" asked the great big voice of Bogey, the Bogey King of all the bogies.

The child was not afraid; he answered:

"It is I, Sabounyouma's son!"

"And what are you doing there?" asked the great big voice of Bogey, the Bogey King of all the bogies.





"I am breaking a stem of millet to suck the juice," the child answered.

And he went on chewing the stems.

"Wait, I'll give you a hand!"

And so Bogey called his playmates to help the child.

How sweet it was! How good! What a feast! Before evening it had all been eaten up!

Fine.

And now the child didn't dare go home to the village! At nightfall his father came to look for him.

When Sabounyouma came to the field and saw that everything had been destroyed he was very angry. He caught hold of his son to beat him. But he had no sooner given the child one blow than:

"Who is there?" asked the great big voice of Bogey, the Bogey King of all the bogies.

The man, very angry, answered:

"It is I, Sabounyouma!"

"And what are you doing there?" asked the great big voice of Bogey, the Bogey King of all the bogies.

"I am beating my son, because he's eaten up all my field of millet," answered Sabounyouma. And he went on striking the child.

"Wait, I'll give you a hand!"

So Bogey called his playmates to help Sabounyouma.

How they laughed! What sport it was! What a game! Before midnight the child had fallen dead beneath their blows.

Fine.

And now Sabounyouma dared not return to his home! At daybreak his wife came to look for him.

When Sabounyouma's wife in her turn came to the field, and saw the dead body of her son, she began to weep. She mourned, and accused her husband. But no sooner had she shed one tear than:

"Who is there?" asked the great big voice of Bogey, the Bogey King of all the bogies.

The wife, in tears, replied:

"It is I, Sabounyouma's wife!"

"What are you doing?" asked the

great big voice of Bogey, the Bogey King of all the bogies.

"I am weeping for my little son, because my husband has killed him," answered Sabounyouma's wife. And she fell to shedding tears once more.

"Wait, I'll give you a hand!"

Then Bogey called his playmates to help Sabounyouma's wife.

How they wept! What fun! What a joke! Before dawn the woman had been carried away on the flood!

Fine.

And now Sabounyouma was alone, all alone in the world. He was powerless to go away, any more. An insect bit him; he scratched himself.

But no sooner had he begun to scratch himself than:

"Who is there?" asked the great big voice of Bogey, the Bogey King of all the bogies.

The man, frightened, answered tremblingly:

"It is I, Sabounyouma!"

"And what are you doing there?"

asked the great big voice of Bogey, the Bogey King of all the bogies.

"I'm scratching myself because something bit me," said the man, his teeth chattering with fear.

"And who gave you permis-S-S-sion?" cried Bogey, threateningly.

"No one," cried the man and he started to run.

"Wait, I'll give you a hand!"

And so Bogey called all his people to help Sabounyouma scratch himself. They scratched his skin; they scratched his flesh. Soon they had scratched right through to the bone. Sabounyouma made no resistance; he fell dead.

Fine, fine.

Ever since that day no one dares to touch this piece of ground. No one ever gathers wood there, not even dead wood for kindling the fire. The jungle is thick there, with very tall trees, and there are a great many hippopotami and crocodiles. It lies in a hollow. One can see it quite clearly from the bearers' path, before one comes to the village of Up-Up very near

the river Glug-Glug, in the country called
Echo-Echo, all overgrown with high and
low brush.

If you cut wood in this forest, the echo
will claim it.

Run away!



Possible---Impossible

Possible—Impossible

THERE is a land that is the Land of Orphans.

There is a race that is the Orphan race. There is a king that is the King of the Orphans. He is not an ogre, like most of the kings of the earth, no; he is a sage. He is a tiny child, not yet one year old.

And this is how it all happened:

I.

There was a tiny little bird, no bigger than a wren, that fluttered about in the forest clearings and sang:

Tiara-tiô!

Nothing happened when he sang, for the little bird had no thought of evil. He needed nothing. He was quite content to flutter about in the clearings, singing:

Tiara-tiô, ndiorô-ndiorô-ndiorô!

II.

One day a hunter surprised him there, took aim and drew his bow. But the little

bird came and perched on the arrow, saying:

"Spare me, hunter, I am only a little magic bird! Look, there is the spoor of the elephant and the tracks of the antelope. Follow them up and you will have good hunting!"

"Possible! But it's you that I want!" returned the obstinate hunter.

"Well, my friend, you are wasting your time, you will never get me," said the little bird. "Now, I call myself Possible! Impossible! Possible!"

And to play a trick on the hunter, he let him catch him in his hand.



III.

"Aha!" said the hunter. "You see! Now who is the stronger?"

"Ndiorô-ndiorô-ndiorô!" said Possible-Impossible. "It isn't all over yet!"

"What? Are you still arguing about it?"

Well, well!" And the hunter cut his throat.

"Ndiorô-ndiorô-ndiorô!" said Possible-Impossible. "It isn't all over yet!"

Then the hunter plucked him, but Possible-Impossible still cried: "Ndiorô-ndiorô-ndiorô! It isn't all over yet!"

"Well, we'll see about that," said the hunter, tying the little bird to his belt. "It isn't all over, no, but my wife and children are going to eat you, all the same!"

IV.

When he reached the entrance of the village the hunter met one of his friends, who told him: "Your wife and children are dead!"

"Who killed them?" asked the hunter.

"They had the colic . . ."

"Ndiorô-ndiorô-ndiorô!" said Possible-Impossible. "It isn't all over yet!"

V.

The unhappy hunter made no reply, but when he reached home he cut the bird up into little bits and put them in the

saucepan over a hot fire. Possible-Impossible sang in a whisper:

“Ndiorô-ndiorô-ndiorô! It isn't all over yet!”

The neighbours' wives, who had come in the morning to fetch hot embers for their fires, came back at nightfall on the same errand. The saucepan was still in the same place, over the blazing fire. From inside the saucepan came a tiny voice that sang in a whisper:

“Ndiorô-ndiorô-ndiorô! I am Possible; I am Impossible; I won't cook! It isn't all over yet!”

The women ran away, terrified, and before long the whole village knew that the hunter had a saucepan that talked.

Very much ashamed, the hunter realized at last that the bird would never cook, and in great haste he went and threw it away in the forest, in the same spot where he caught it.

VI.

Alas, it was no little bird that came out of the saucepan now, but an enormous

beast with terrible jaws! This monster swallowed the hunter, then reaching up on its hind legs, it swallowed the moon.

It became pitch dark . . .

Then this frightful beast set out to walk. Its tail, a hundred cubits long, made more noise than the thunder. When it came to a forest, it swallowed the forest, and when it came to the edge of a river, it swallowed the river. Nothing stopped it, it kept right on. When it came to a mountain, it swallowed the mountain. It swallowed the lake, then the plain, and it made one mouthful of the swamp and all the broken pots that were lying in it; at last it came to the men's village, and just as the cocks were about to crow to give the alarm, it swallowed them all. Then it turned back into a bird again, but a big bird, a huge night-bird, ashen-grey, that perched on the baobab in the very middle of the village.

At dawn, when the men came out from their huts, they saw this big night-bird perched on the baobab. Its eyes were shut, but its beak was wide open. Only its

neck swelled in and out, and from its throat came a sound like a drum:

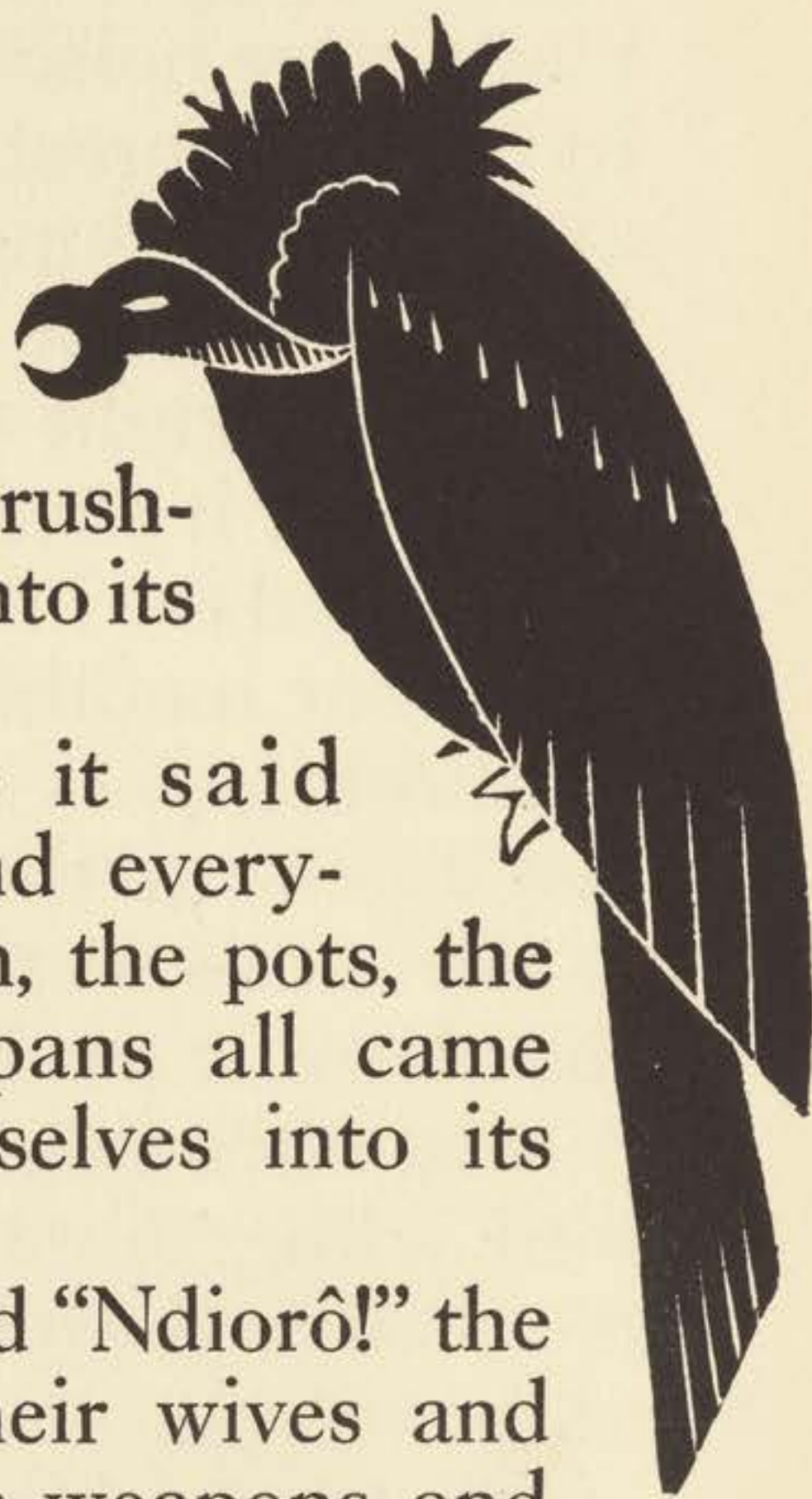
Ndiorô-ndiorô-ndiorô!

VII.

The first time it said "Ndiorô!" the herds of cattle broke down the enclosure of thorn-bushes where they were penned, and came rushing to hurl themselves into its wide open beak.

The second time it said "Ndiorô!" the huts and everything that was in them, the pots, the calabashes, the saucepans all came running to hurl themselves into its wide open beak.

The third time it said "Ndiorô!" the men, together with their wives and children, with all their weapons and belongings, went crazy and began to crowd round and round to hurl themselves into its wide open beak.



The big bird swallowed everything, then it opened its eyes.

The world was deserted. It had eaten everything. It hopped down from the baobab and went to peck at a cooking-spoon which someone had dropped. It found a sick dog, an old mat, and a tiny guinea-fowl chick. It swallowed all these. There were still some hot embers among the ashes. It swallowed everything, everything. There was still a little smoke rising up. It swallowed the smoke. There was nothing left, no, nothing at all.

Then it went back to its perch, and was quiet.

Nothing stirred.

VIII.

All at once the bird heard a tiny little noise.

"Wee-wee-wee! Quee-quee-quee! Who says quee-quee? Little me!"

The bird opened one eye.

There was a tiny little baby, whimpering.

He had been forgotten. He was all

naked, alone in the world. He kicked about.

The bird hopped down from from the baobab to eat him up. But a big grasshopper gave the baby a push with his head and pushed him down a rat hole. The bird swallowed the grasshopper but he couldn't catch the child, who had rolled right down to the bottom of the hole. The bird couldn't get his big beak inside.

So the bird went back to his perch, and slept with one eye open.

Nothing stirred.

IX.

"Gr-gr-grr! What's down there? What do I hear? Gr-gr-gr-rr!"

The bird opened his other eye.

It was the same little child again. He was three months old now. He was sitting on the top of an anthill.

He had been forgotten. He was all naked, alone in the world. There he was, kicking about.

The bird hopped down from the bao-





bab to eat him up. But a big strong ant gave the baby a push with his head and pushed him down inside the ant-hill. The bird swallowed the ant, he swallowed the ant-hill, but he couldn't catch the child, who had rolled right to the bottom of a burrow. The opening was too small. The bird couldn't get his big beak inside.

So the bird went back to his perch, but he slept no longer.

Nothing stirred.

X.

Bing-bang! Cling-clang! Cling-clang!
Bing-bang!

The bird blinked both his eyes.

It was the same little child again. Now he was six months old. He was working at a forge.

The bird ruffled all his feathers out in rage. "What?"

Someone was beating iron.

"What? What? In broad daylight!"

A multitude of blind grubs were busy-ing themselves about the forge. Thousands of worms came out from all the

cracks in the earth. They were all carrying ore and coal. There was a big pile there already; a huge pile.

The bird hopped down from the baobab. He began by eating up all the worms and all the grubs, but he had a hard job of it, for there were lots and lots of them, ever so many.

When he tried to catch the child, the child was in the forge. So then the bird ate the forge. He had a hard time, for there was a lot of iron there, ever so much iron, big lumps and filings too, lots and lots of it.

When he tried to catch the child, the child ran and hid in the pile of ore and coal. The bird ran after him, but he was feeling heavy, very heavy. But he began to peck at the pile, all the ore, all the lumps of coal, he swallowed them all, all, and there was a great deal, a very great deal.

By the time the bird had swallowed the whole pile, the child had disappeared. He found nothing at the bottom of the pile but a tiny iron coffer, all shining, shining like the sun, that dazzled him. So the bird

swallowed the coffer and then he went to sleep again.

He was not yet sated, but he was full and heavy, much too heavy to hop back again on to his baobab, so he went to sleep on the ground, and slept soundly.

He slept.

Nothing stirred.



XI.

Crick-crack-creak!
Crick-crack-creak!

It was the little child again, opening the coffer.

The child opened the coffer, he crept out of the coffer, he was in the bird's belly!

It was all dark there! So in order to see the child opened the bird's belly. Zzz! He opened his belly with a big knife, zzz-zz! He opened it with a knife as sharp as a spear. He opened the belly and fell out head first.

Out he fell on to the ground.

© 2085 99

He got a big bump on his forehead.
So then he began to cry.

XII.

There was the little child sitting on the ground, all naked. He was all alone in the world. He rubbed his bump, and wept. He wept because he was all alone in the world, because he didn't know what to do with himself, and also because his bump hurt him.

He heard voices, crying out to him:
"We thank you, O King!"

There were all the animals and all the things, coming out in turn from the bird's belly. There came the forests, the mountains, the moon, the lake, the plain, the swamp, and even the old broken pots that the bird had swallowed. They all went home again, calling out to the child:

"Thanks, O King!"

Then came the bulls, the oxen, the cocks, the guineafowls, the dogs and the cats, the village huts, the pots and saucepans—all came out from the bird's belly, and they all went back to their places

again, calling out to the child:

"Thanks, O King!"

Then came the men, the old men and the young men, the women, children, warriors, herdsman, hunters, all alive and well, laughing just as if nothing at all had happened. As they all found themselves back again in the same place they went home, without saying anything to the child at all.

So then, seeing that they had forgotten all about him once more, the child said:

THANK YOU!

And he got up and went back into the bird's belly again.

XIII.

But he soon came out again with thousands and thousands of companions, each brighter and more shining than the other, as though clothed in fire. They rose in the air, they swarmed in the sunlight and settled down on the village to plague the men and women. They were the fly people, the bees and the wasps, which live on

nothing at all. They are countless.

Their king is the little child, less than a year old.

He is called the King of the Orphans.
His people are the Orphan People.

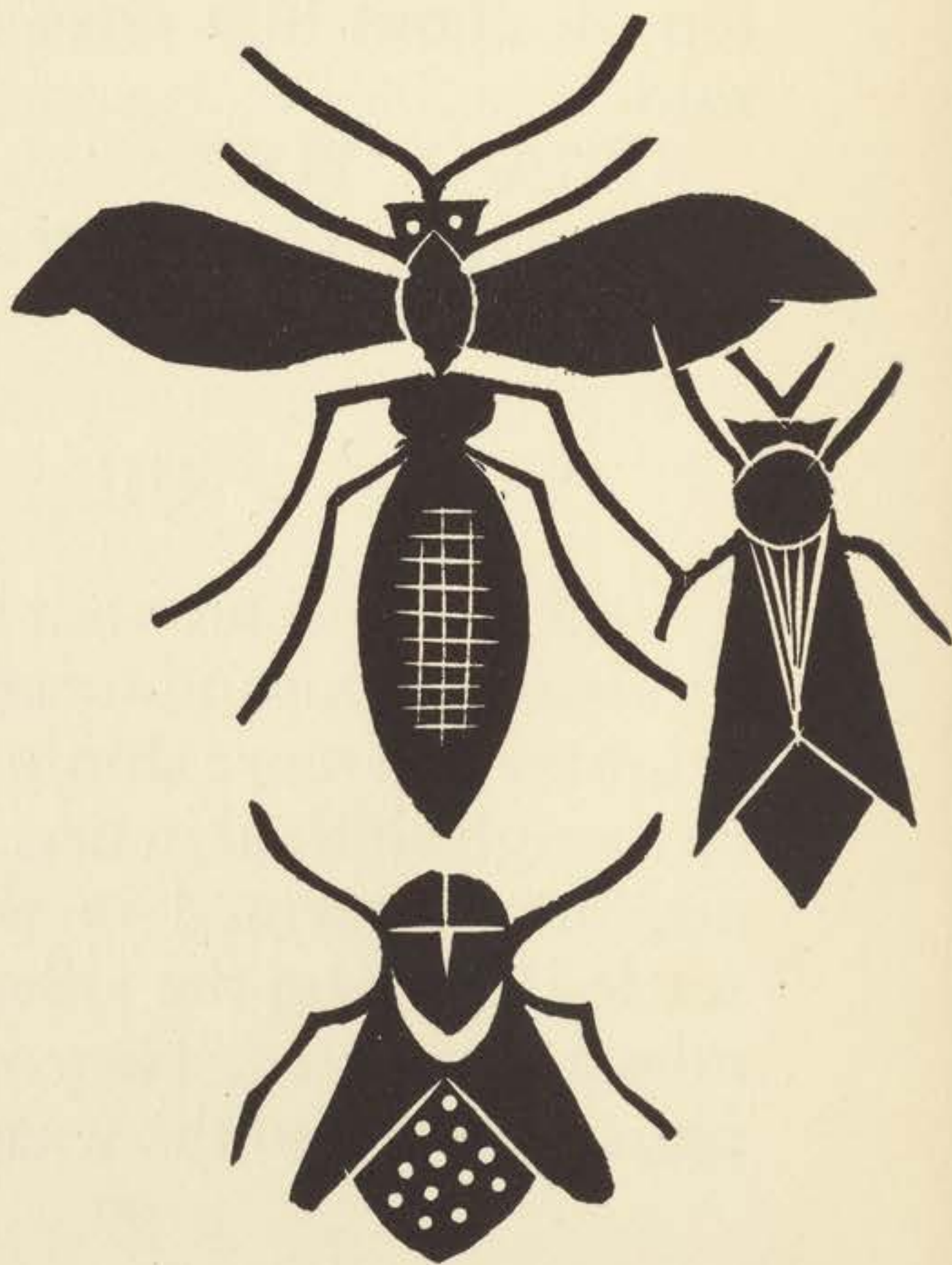
And his country is the Orphan Country.

The Orphans torment mankind all the time. They are a plague.

Ndiorô-ndiorô-
ndiorô!

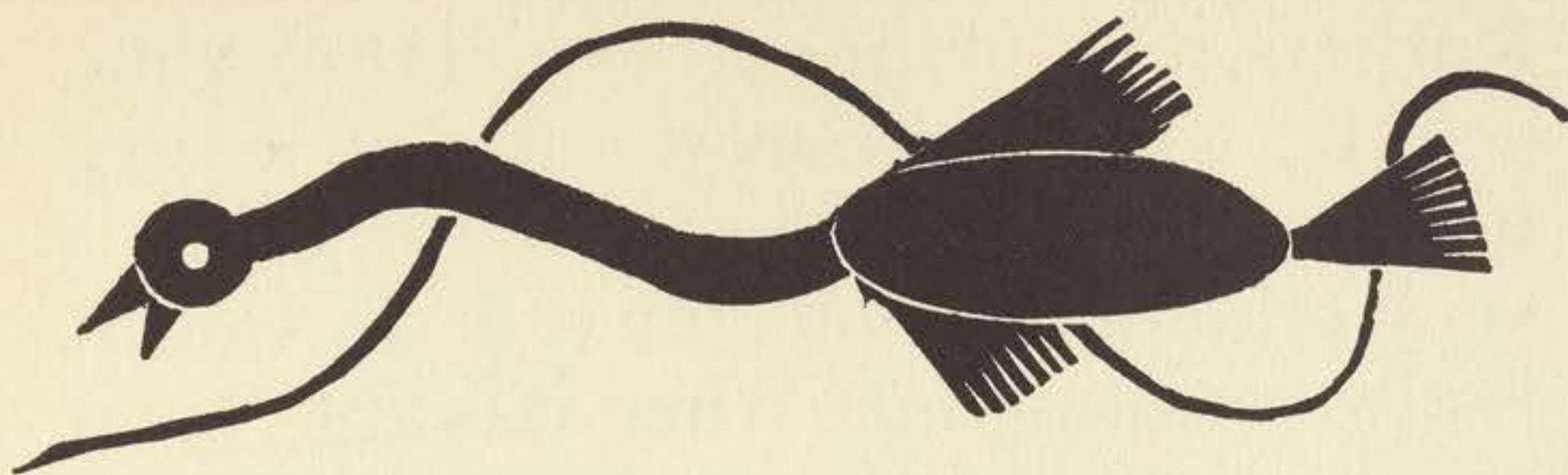
sings a little
bird, no bigger
than a wren,
that flutters
about in the
clearings and
catches the
flies, the wasps
and the bees,
to keep them
from torment-
ing mankind:

Tiara-tiô!



The Wind





The Wind

WHEN the dry season begins you see all the birds soaring very high in the air. They turn, they circle, they swoop, rise and fall, pursuing one another wildly, in tireless rout. Every morning they meet in the sky, where they wheel in flocks, sporting together and chattering as loud as they can. But if you watch them closely you will see that all this whirlwind of wings and feathers, those deafening cries, that seem like a great battle going on, are not caused by the birds themselves but by the wind, the wind that carries them, sweeps them along, the wind that animates them and blows them here and there.

The same thing happens on the bare ground; that object that raises the dust as it goes by, that swift ball of trembling

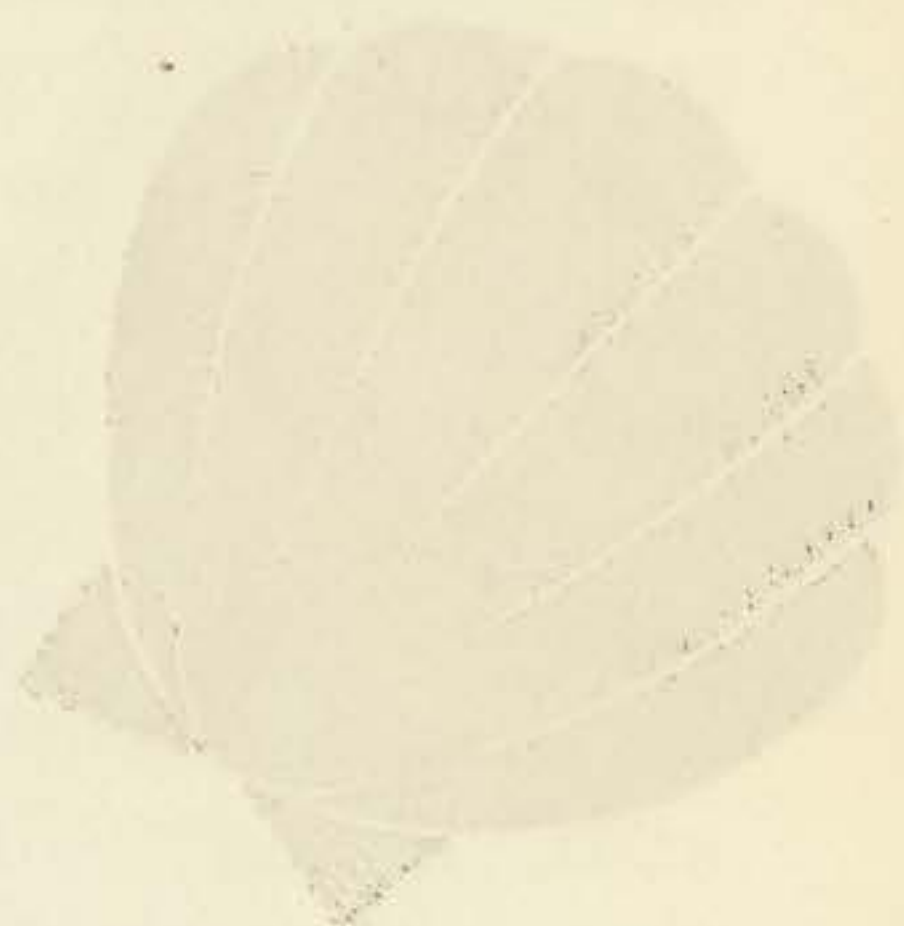
feathers, it is not the ostrich, it is the wind.

The wind lives on the top of a very high mountain. It lives in a cave, but it is very seldom at home, for it is restless. It is always going out. When it is at home it gives voice, and the cavern echoes afar with a noise like thunder.

If by chance it stays at home for two or three days then it must have exercise. It dances, capers, leaps about for no reason; it claws at the flint with its nails, tears at the rocks with its beak, flaps its wings in the doorway, till the distant earth trembles and the mountain where it lives is all torn into gullies. But you mustn't think that it is angry, or trying its strength, no. It is just amusing itself. It is playing, that's all.

It takes so much exercise that it is always hungry. That's why it goes in and out, comes home and then rushes off again. But it is more thoughtless than greedy. It flies far away to fetch a tiny little grain that it will drop again before it reaches home, to pounce upon some sparkling stone to carry back to its eyrie. Its cave is full of shells, of pebbles, of use-





less glittering things; an old scrap of iron, a mirror. There is no food, nothing good to eat. Out-of-doors it will snap at a gnat, snatch a banana, dig up a root of manioc; shake the trees without gathering the nuts, jump over the rice-patches and into the millet field, loot the corn, scatter the haricots and beans. Always distracted, but with a covetous eye, it nibbles here and there but never manages to make a good meal. And that's why it is always hungry.

It is such a brainless creature that often it doesn't know itself why it went out, and even forgets that it is hungry. Then it says to itself:

"Why am I wandering about like this?" And it gets into a rage and destroys everything, plantations and all, and terrifies the people sheltered in their villages. When it has succeeded in overturning the king's hut then it is happy, and flies away again high up into the air.

They say then that it is hovering.

The water shows barely a ripple.

Have you noticed that the wind has no shadow, even at midday when it is

prowling around the sun?

It is a wizard.

That's why it is always changing.

It is the child of the Moon and the Sun.

It never sleeps, and one never knows whether it is joking or idle or angry.

Because of its continual coming and going, turning and re-turning thousands of times on its own tracks, nothing will grow any more around its home. There are only stones there, stones and sand and loose pebbles. It is a fearful desert of heat and thirst, great heat. There the wind plays as though it had a nest full of little ones. But it has no little ones. It lives all alone. And all those tracks in the sand, big and little, are made by the wind standing on its paws or walking on the tips of its wings, and if you fall into a hole it is the wind that made that too, on purpose, with its beak. Try and find the wind! When you think it is on the hill, it is in the ravine; when you look for it in the valley it is on the crest. Try and find the wind! it laughs at you from every gulley, every crevice, far away and just behind your back, it whirls and eddies. What does it look like?



If you follow up
the tracks in the
sand you will
come upon the
tortoise. But the
wind is in the
tortoise. It
laughs. It is a
d r u m. A n d
when you hear a
rattling among
the pebbles, it is
not a lizard, it is
the wind, yes,
the wind.

When at last
the wind gets
too hot in its own country it goes far
away and plunges into the sea. Do you
think those are fish leaping. No, it's the
wind. A whale? No, it's the wind. A canoe
that has overturned? No, it's the wind.
A cloud?

Here comes the rain! Here comes the rain!
The dry season is over again!

And it is the wind once more.
Thanks, wind!

Why? Why? Or
The Adventures of a
Tiny Little Chicken
Who Had Not Yet
Been Born

Why? Why? Or The Adventures of a Tiny Little Chicken Who Had Not Yet Been Born

I.

A TREE said:
"I am going to take up my abode
in the plain."

And he at once set out to take up his abode in the plain. He left his brothers in the forest to go and live all alone in the plain. He walked on tiptoe so as not to waken his brothers whom he was leaving behind him, and he carried all his branches under one arm, in a bundle, so as not to make the least little noise, and he went, without so much as one tiny branch trailing or dragging behind him.

He had no sooner reached the edge of

the forest than the frog who was watching there cried out at the top of her voice:

"I see you, little brother Tree!"

The tree stopped short in fright. He shook till his branches rustled.

Then the forest turned over in its sleep, heaved a great sigh, and said like one speaking in a dream:

"Why? Why?"

And everything sank back into profound silence.

Then the tree began to walk very hurriedly. He dared not run yet, for fear of waking the brothers he had left behind, but he took long strides already, waving his arm and moving his legs, without paying much heed to the branches that trailed and dragged behind him, for he had already come quite a long way.

He had no sooner reached the edge of the river, on the borders of the forest, than the frog, who had followed him



all the way, hopping along on her bottom, called out at the top of her voice:

"I see you, little brother Tree!"

The tree stopped short in fright. He trembled till all his limbs shook with a great noise.

Then the forest turned over in its sleep, heaved a great sigh and said, like one speaking in a dream:

"Why? Why?"

And everything sank back into profound silence.

The tree took this opportunity to stride across the river. Now he ran as fast as he could; he ran in the plain that he had chosen, no longer afraid of waking the brothers he had left behind him, for the forest was already so far away. The tree was happy gambolling about in the plain, and he shook his branches till they cracked all around him.

And then the frog, who had followed him obstinately, cried:

"I see you, little brother Tree!"

The tree stopped short, yes, but not from fear. He had reached his destination. He had found the right spot to live

in. So he plunged his roots deep into the ground, and as he was a little out of breath from running he stretched, gave himself a shake, drew three deep breaths and finally went to sleep standing up, murmuring, as though in a dream:

“Why? Why?”

Then everything sank back into deep silence.

The frog played a last little tune on her flute, lit her pipe, sat down on a tuft of grass and waited all night to see what would happen.

II.

When dawn broke, a tall solitary tree was standing in the plain. No one had ever seen a tree in this spot. No one had ever seen a tree so tall and so strong. Its branches were so delicate and fine that they stretched to the horizon; its boughs were so heavy and leafy that they hung to the ground. Ah, how good it would be to live in the shelter of such a tree! All the animals came running to admire this tree, that was unlike any other tree in the world.

All the animals came to stare at it.

Its shade was so tempting that some wanted to lie down and rest there, but between its roots grew a delicate blue grass, and others wanted very much to browse on this blossoming turf. The lion said:

"I see honey, honey!"

And in fact, among the flat leaves of the tree shone some large fruit, round and full like calabashes overflowing with honey. What a god-send!

The jackal ran home at once to fetch his axe. But the giraffe was already perched on the topmost branches, eating the best of the fruit. The elephant tore up the ground, trying to overturn the tree. The rhinoceros tugged on a rope to uproot it. The hippopotamus had climbed up into the tree, but fell down again on the ground, where he rolled and kicked about with his short legs like a beetle on its back; he was no use any more. The flies had brought big knives with which they were slashing at the fruit. The trumpet-birds, the green pigeons, the millet-eaters, the sparrows and the doves

gorged themselves on the honey, carrying home little pots full of it to their nests and returning again at a swoop with their wives and children and all the old folk of their village. The ants and the termites gulped the honey down as though it were common beer; they drank, they poured, they spilled it everywhere. There was a beast, the-beast-that-no-one-knew, who ate all the leaves from the tree, and another, the-beast-that-is-red-and-yellow, who tore off the bark, ground it to powder and used it as seasoning while devouring the tree, its fruit, its biggest fruit, and also here and there a mouthful of leaves. No



one knew these two beasts, but no one paid any attention to them, they were all so busy with their own stomachs and in such a hurry to eat, to cram themselves, stuff their bellies as full as they

could once and for all. All the fruit was gone already, but the honey still flowed through a thousand holes, a thousand cracks, a thousand scratches made by the claws, the horns and the hoofs. All the animals of creation had gathered round the tree, breaking down its boughs and browsing on the twigs. By the time the jackal returned with his axe there was nothing left of the honey-tree at all.

Then the jackal fell into a rage and cried:

“Run away! Get out, run away!”

And he leaped to the right, brandishing his axe, he leaped to the left, giving great blows; he was in a fury, and he killed all the animals.

Then the frog, who had stayed all this while in her tuft of grass to see what would happen, cried out at the top of her voice:

“I see you, little brother Jackal!”

The jackal began to leap every way at once, but this time he could only snap at his own shadow. He became delirious. He turned round and round moaning, as one moans in delirium:

“Why? Why?”

In the end he ran away as fast as his legs would carry him.

The frog was left alone in the world, alone with the-beast-that-no-one-knew and the-beast-that-is-red-and-yellow. They were two queen-beasts. They took the frog with them and all three set out on their travels. To the end of the world.

III.

The frog still sang, played on her flute, gossiped and told stories all along the way. She said:

Once upon a time there were a great many bees' nests with a lot of honey in them. There was honey everywhere, it wasn't rare at all, it was no luxury and one was not obliged to fight and go through all sorts of trouble to get it. Everyone ate all they wanted and when one had enough one went elsewhere and ate something else, and everyone lived happily and at peace.

But there! There are always gluttons and gossips and those who can never get

enough; there are stupid people, and there is the man-who-always-comes-back-to-the-same-place.

This man was known for his terrific appetite.

When he found a bees' nest he ate everything, the honey, the wax and the bees, he couldn't stop, he even ate the tree that the nest was in. And when he had eaten everything up he still couldn't go away, he ate the trees all around, and after he left he would come back again to the same place to make quite sure he hadn't forgotten something. And that's why they called him the-man-who-always-comes-back-to-the-same-place, and he did great damage in the forest, for he could find a nest where no one else could.

One day while he was cutting down a hollow tree he suddenly heard a voice from inside the tree, calling:

"Take care, you are cutting me!"

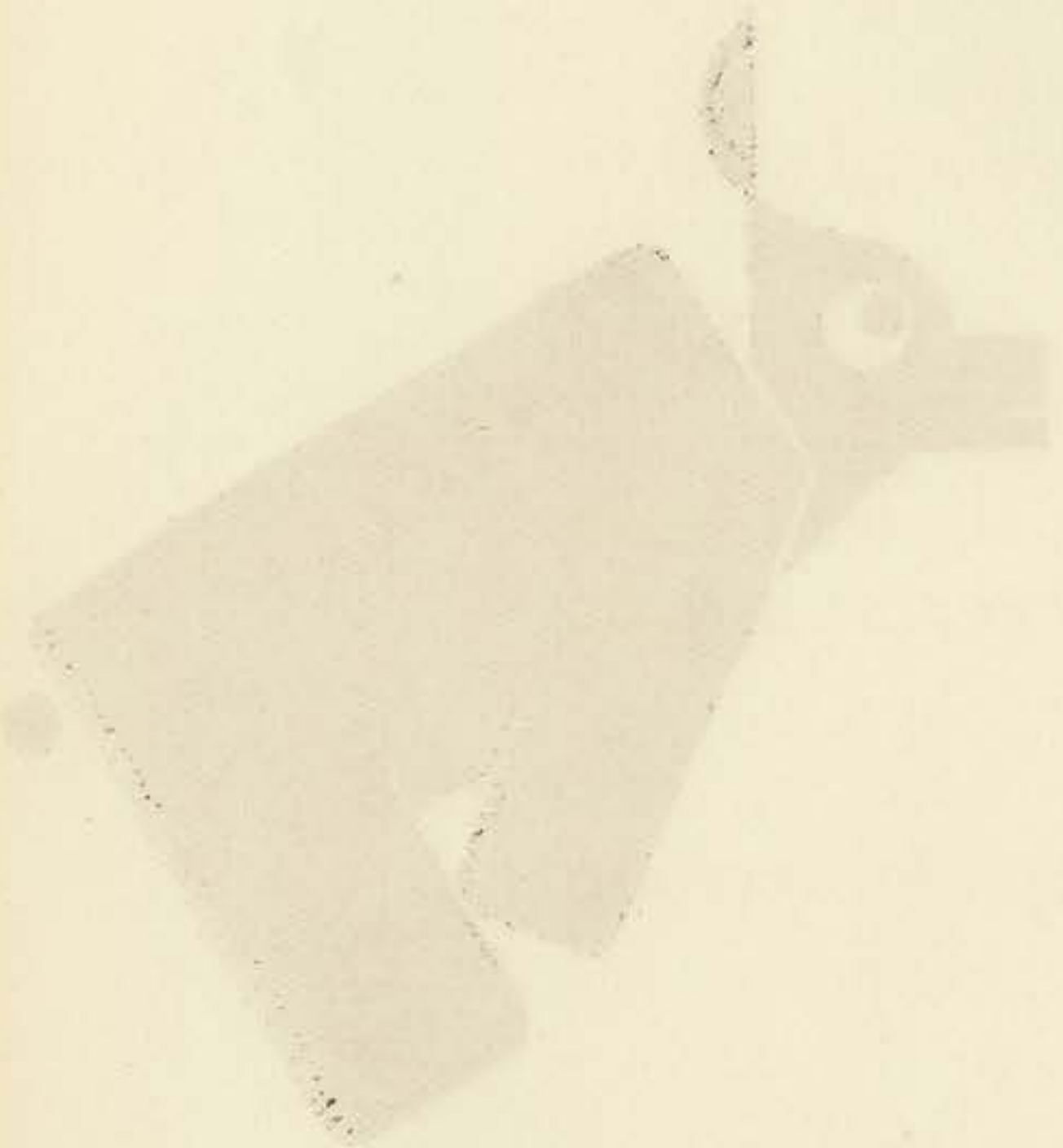
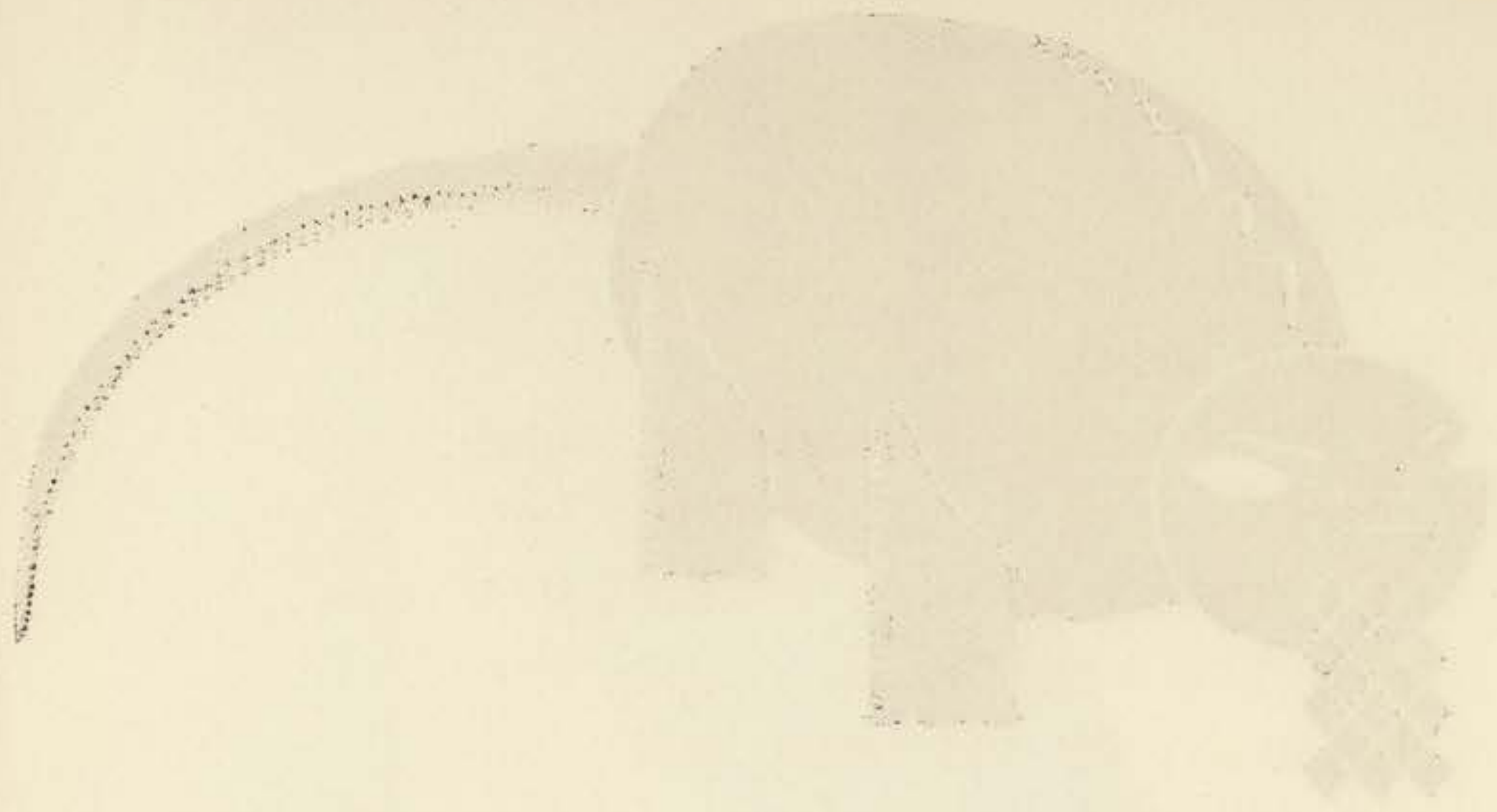
He opened the tree very carefully, and he found a woman crouched in the hollow. She was fresh and sleek and all perfumed, and she smiled at him. She

told him her name was Outakounoua, and that she was the genie of the honey.

As she was quite naked the man gathered some big leaves and made her a waist-cloth. Then he asked her to marry him. She accepted at once, but on condition that he must never pronounce her name, Outakounoua, which means: the-ogress-who-is-inside.

They lived together a long time and were happy, particularly the man, who no longer needed to come back always to the same place, and who now could rest all day long. His wife gave him honey in abundance, and not only did she give him all the honey he wanted, day and night, at will, but she also made an excellent drink with this same honey, a drink that she brewed herself, an intoxicating drink, so much so that the-man-who-always-comes-back-to-the-same-place never stirred any more but lay there in his drunkenness, for the bowl that his wife handed him was never empty. The man might drink all he liked, the bowl was always full, and even if he had invited all





his neighbours to drink with him the bowl would not have been emptied by so much a finger's breadth; on the contrary, he alone could have made everyone drunk, even the king and his ministers if the king and his ministers had been among the guests! But the man was very careful not to invite anyone; he wanted to empty the bowl himself down to the very bottom, and that's why he had never done drinking this fine intoxicating drink.

One day he called his wife and said to her:

"Tell me, how is it that this bowl always stays full, Outakounoua?"

No sooner had the name slipped from his lips than his wife flew away, crying, as one cries in fear:

"Why? Why?"

Ever since that day honey has become a very rare luxury.

VI.

The frog and her two companions, the-beast-that-no-one-knew and the-beast-that-is-red-and-yellow, arrived at

the end of the world. But they had not yet come to the end of their journey. They travelled further still, in a place where there was no ground, no earth, not a single thing to set one's foot down on, but they kept on all the same, only they trod on water and on air, which is very tiring.

Coming to a dark place, in the air like everywhere else, the two beasts were so tired they didn't want to go any further. They built a fire, settled themselves and lay down, and as they had nothing to eat they began instead to count out loud how many, just how many steps they had come from here to there, from there to the next place, and from that to the end of the world? When it came to counting their steps from the end of the world to the place they were in now, how could they possibly do it, since they had left no tracks but had walked on the air, without so much as setting a foot down! They had reached the end of the world, yes, they had even gone beyond the end of the world! And so these two beasts felt themselves lost, and they began to weep, ask-

ing one another, as
one asks when one
is lost:

“Why? Why?”

V.

Though the
two queen-beasts
had given up, the
frog was not discouraged. She wanted to
know what was further on. She made one
more leap forward and fell into the dark-
ness, just to see whereabouts she would
land.

So she jumped, and she fell.

She fell, she tumbled, she rolled, she
fell, and thus she came to the country of
Mosikasika, of the little boy who had not
yet been born.

It is a country that lies behind the
lakes. On one side live all the women and
on the other side all the babies who have
not yet come into the world. The women
laugh and the little babies cry. They are
separated only by the lakes.

The first lake is like a woollen cloth,



but it is made of honey.

The second lake is like a white cloth, but it is honey.

The third lake is like an indigo cloth, but it is honey.

The fourth lake is like a linen cloth, but it is honey.

The fifth lake is like a striped cloth, but it is honey.

The sixth lake is like a cloth of motley, but it is honey.

The seventh lake is like a cloth of red silk, but it is honey.

All this honey belongs to Chitoukou-louma-koumba, the-ogre-who-lives-at-the-bottom. He needs all these lakes, all these beautiful cloths, for he cannot stand the sun. He doesn't eat his honey. He lives at the bottom. He clothes himself in it, for he cannot stand the sun.

The frog never piped a word, but she thought:

"Why? Why?"

VI.

This is why.

Listen to the story.

Let the story come.

The story comes, it comes from a long way off, it comes from the frog who was lost, hopelessly lost, lost in the country of Mosikasika, of the little boy who had not yet come into the world!

Before Mosikasika was born his mother said to her husband:

"Husband, I don't want to eat any more!"

So the wife didn't eat any more and she didn't drink any more, and she didn't dress herself any more. She looked very ill and she never spoke.

As she never spoke her husband became uneasy, and he asked her: "Wife, why are you ill? What do you want? Why do you never take food any more?"

"Why? Why?" said the wife angrily. "It's easy to ask! I want . . . I want . . ."

"And what do you want?" the husband asked again.

The wife said: "I want some wild honey! I long with all my heart for wild honey!"

"And where shall I find it, O wife?" said the husband.

He went out to look for honey in the forest. He brought a little back to his wife. But she refused to taste it, saying:

"This honey you found is full of dead bees. I don't want it, I don't want it! What I want is wild honey, pure honey!"

The man went back to the forest. He searched for a long time; he found some more honey. He brought it back to his wife. But she still refused to taste it, saying:

"The honey you bring me this time is full of ants. I don't want it. I don't want it! What I want is wild honey, pure honey, without any dead bees or ants or bumblebees!"

The man went back once more to the forest. He searched for a long, long time and at last he found a heap of honey at the top of a tree, and brought it back to his wife. But she wouldn't touch it, not for anything in the world! She refused it, saying:

"That? It is full of earth!"

The man went back to the forest. He searched everywhere. At last he came to the shore of a lake, full of sweetened

water. He took some, came running back and gave it to his wife. The wife accepted it. She became very cheerful; she ate, she drank the sweetened water, then she dressed herself, drank some more sweetened water, ate a little more, and went out into the yard to prepare her husband's dinner. She ground the meal, she lit the fire, she cooked the food, singing all the while, she was so happy. She had had her honey.

When everything was ready she went into the hut with her husband's dinner. But now she found her husband in bed. He beckoned to her, and said:

"Come here. Now it is I who don't want to eat. It's my turn now!"

"And what is it that's lacking?" asked the wife.

The man said: "Nothing."

"Nothing, nothing!" said the woman angrily. "It's easy to say! Come, what do you want?"

The man said:

"You have bothered me long enough with your honey, now go and fetch something for me!"

"And what do you want?" asked his wife.

"I want some water," he answered.

"Is that all?" And the woman went out with her pitcher to draw some water in the yard.

She returned with the water, but her husband wouldn't touch it. He said:

"I don't want it. I don't want water that the frogs croak in!"

The woman went out. She went and drew some water from the creek. She came back, but the man wouldn't touch it. He said:

"I don't want it. You got it out of a pond full of toads."

The woman went out. She went and fetched some water from a pond, a long, long way from the village. She returned for the third time with water, but still the man wouldn't touch it. He said:

"I don't want it. This time you got it from a pond full of rushes."

The wife went out again. She walked and walked. She went a long way, and at last she got some water, a long way off beyond the forest, from a swamp that was

there. When she came back her husband wouldn't touch it; he said:

"I don't want it. Now it smells of bull-rushes! I want water that has no taste, water that doesn't smell of rushes nor of bullrushes nor of reeds nor toads nor frogs! I want pure water, quite pure!"

The woman took her pitcher again and set out once more.

She went so far that she lost her way. She no longer knew where she was. Search as she might, she could find nothing. At last she saw a lake, and ran towards it.

There was nothing growing in this lake, neither reeds nor rushes nor bull-rushes, and there was not a frog nor a toad. She plunged her pitcher quickly into the lake and filled it. She drew it out brimming and was just lifting it to her head to carry it when the water, all the water, spilled over her. Now this was not water, it was honey. The woman felt the taste of it in her mouth. She threw down her pitcher, forgot all about her husband who was waiting at home, lay down full-

length and drank, drank, drank till she had drunk the whole lake.

Then the genie of the lake, Chitouloulouma-koumba, the ogre-who-lives-at-the-bottom, said:

"What? I can feel the rays of the sun piercing my shoulders! I am melting!"

He looked, and saw the woman, who was unable to move because her body had swollen so enormously with all the honey she had drunk; she couldn't even walk, she was so heavy from having drunk the lake, the whole lake.

So then the genie of the lake, Chitouloulouma-koumba, the ogre-who-lives-at-the-bottom, sprang upon her, crying out:

"Ah, you wicked woman, I am going to eat you up!"

And he ate her up.

Meanwhile the woman's husband was in bed at home. He waited for his wife, and persisted in eating nothing, nothing at all, till she came back. In the end he went to sleep, murmuring, as one murmurs when dying of hunger:

"Why? Why?"

VII.

This is why.

Listen to the story.

Let the story come.

The story comes, it comes from a long way off, we have it from the frog who was lost, hopelessly lost, lost in the country of Mosikasika, of the little boy who had not yet come into the world!

When Mosikasika came into the world, he was a tiny little chicken.

He was a very, very tiny chicken, but he gave a great deal of trouble already. For instance, he didn't like honey.

When he was born he was already an orphan.

He said: "My father died of hunger, and the king owes him a grain of corn!"

He took down his father's game-bag and set out on his way to collect the debt.

He had not gone three steps before he came to a stick of wood that tripped him and knocked him over. The little chicken picked himself up and said: "Ah, stick of wood, was that you there? Really, I never saw you!"

"Where are you going?" the stick of wood asked him.

"I am going," said the little chicken, "to collect a debt that is owing to my father."

"Let's go together," said the stick of wood.

"Come along!"

The little chicken took the stick of wood and put it in his game-bag.

Going on his way he met a cat, who said to him:

"Ah, here's a nice little morsel for me!"

"No," said the little chicken, "it wouldn't be worth your while!"

"And why?" asked the cat.

"I'm worth more than that. I'm on my way to collect a debt that is owing to my father."

"Then let's go together," said the cat. "Perhaps there'll be something good to eat there."

"Perhaps!"

And the little chicken took the cat and put him in his game-bag. There came a hyena who said to him:

"Where are you going with your game-bag?"

"I'm going to collect a debt that is owing to my father."

"We'll go together," said the hyena.

"Come along!"

The little chicken took the hyena and put him in his game-bag, and continued on his way. He met a lion.

"Where are you going?"

"I am going to collect a debt that is owing to my father."

"We'll go together," said the lion.

"Come on."

The little chicken took the lion and put him in his game-bag.

He came to an elephant, who was eating bananas. The elephant asked him politely: "And where are you going, little chicken?"

"I am going to collect a debt that is owing to my father."

"Then let's go together," said the elephant.

"Let's!"

The little chicken took the elephant and put him in his game-bag. He set out

again and met a warrior who said to him:

"Where are you going, with that game-bag stuffed so full?"

The little chicken answered: "I am going to collect a debt that is owing to my father."

"Well, let's go together," said the warrior.

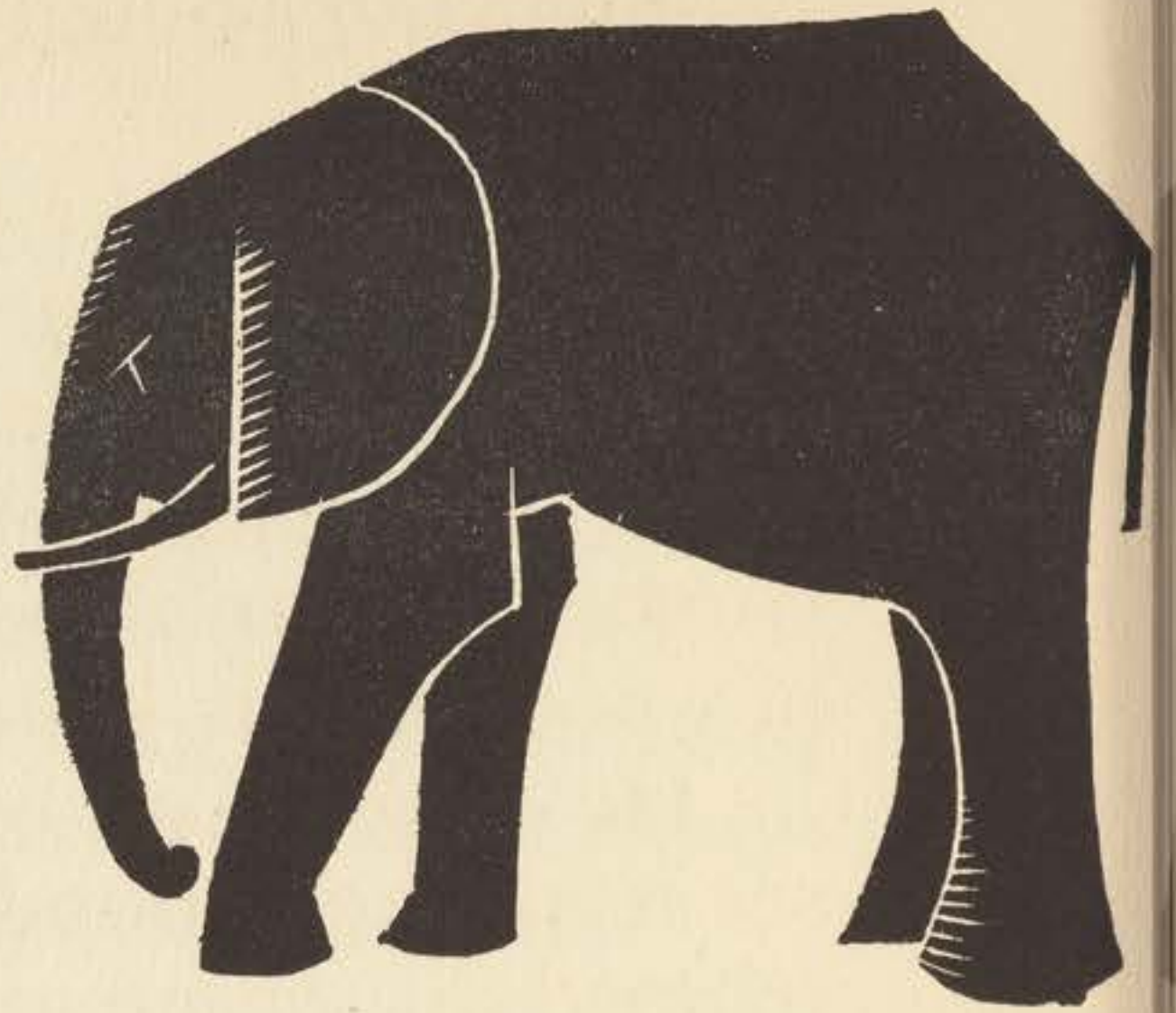
"Come on!"

The little chicken took the warrior and put him in his game-bag.

At last he came to the village where the king lived. The village folk at once ran to tell the king that the little chicken had arrived and that he had come to collect his father's debt.

The king said:

"Heat some water, and throw the boiling water over him; then he'll die and the village won't have to pay what is owing to his father."



The king's daughter cried out: "I'll do it! I want to do it!"

They heated the water, and the king's daughter went to meet the little chicken with the pot of boiling water on her head.

When he saw her coming the little chicken said to the stick of wood: "Stick of wood, now is your moment!"

He took it out of the game-bag and set it on the ground. The stick of wood tripped the young girl and made her fall; the boiling water spilled all over her, and so it was the king's daughter who got scalded.

The village folk said then:

"We must put him in the chicken-yard with the big hens: they'll peck him to death with their beaks."

But the little chicken took the cat out of the game-bag and said: "I set you free!"

The cat killed all the hens, chose the finest and fattest and ran away with his prey.

The people said: "Put him in the goat-pen; there he'll get trampled to death!"

They were determined to make him

die, so they wouldn't have to pay the debt to his father.

They put him in the pen.

The little chicken said: "Hyena, I set you free!"

The hyena killed all the goats, chose the finest and fattest one and escaped with his prey.

Then they said: "Put him in the cattle pen!"

He was put there.

But the little chicken said: "Lion, now is your moment!"

The lion came out from the game-bag, slew all the cattle, chose the finest and fattest and devoured it on the spot.

The village people were furious. They said:

"This chicken is an insolent fellow who refuses to die! We'll shut him in with the camels and they'll stamp on him and kill him."

He was shut in. But the little chicken said:

"My good little elephant, my nice little elephant, save my life! It's your turn now!"

And he took the elephant from his game-bag. The elephant looked at the camels, challenged them, and crushed them all to death, down to the very last one.

The village people went to the king. They said:

"This little chicken won't die here; give him what is owing to his father and let him go. We'll overtake him in the jungle, kill him, and take away his heritage."

Then the king ordered the royal treasury to be opened, and they gave the little chicken the grain of corn that was owing to him.

And the little chicken left the village.

Then everyone mounted on horseback, even the king himself, and went in pursuit of the little chicken.

But the little chicken took the warrior very carefully out of his game-bag and said to him:

"Warrior, now is your time! Show how brave you are!"

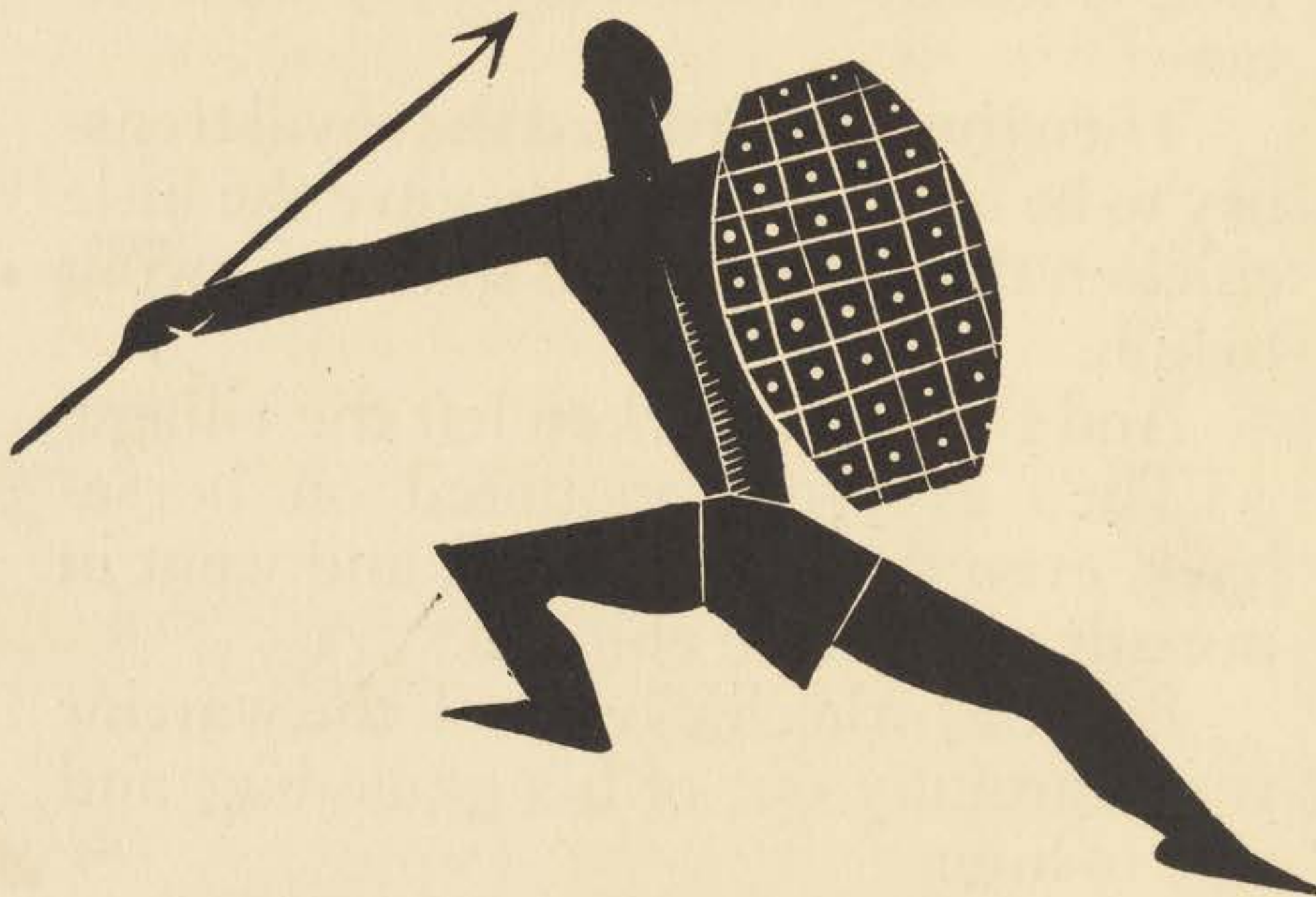
The warrior slew everybody.

Then the little chicken returned to the

king's village, took possession of it, and
became king himself.

That's all. The story is over.

Why, oh why is the frog such a liar!



THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT
135th STREET BRANCH 103 WEST 135th ST.

nd